

COMEDIES AND FARCES

W.D. HOWELLS



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MINOR DRAMAS

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MINOR DRAMAS

BY

WILLIAM D. HOWELLS

VOLUME I



EDINBURGH

DAVID DOUGLAS, CASTLE STREET

1907

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A LETTER TO THE PUBLISHER

DEAR MR. DOUGLAS,—Nothing, since you first asked, twenty-five years ago, to reprint one of my early novels, has given me more pleasure than your willingness to bring out a complete edition of my little comedies, or farces, whichever people like to call them. Until I put them together, I did not think there were so many, but as there will not, I suppose, be many more, in the nature of things, this seems a good time to collect them.

When I first began to write them, I meant them to be read rather than acted, and that they might the better represent themselves to the reader, I fancied making the stage direction very full, and a part of the literature of the piece. I disused the ordinary technicalities, and tried to get them before the mind's eye without the help of the Centre and the Right and Left, and all that,

and I dropped those distracting parentheses and brackets employed in printing drama, and put a colon in place of a period after the name of the character at the beginning of a speech, and quotationed the speeches as if they had been speeches in a novel. I hope your printer will have allowed me the colons in this edition, but if he has only allowed me the rest of my innovations, it will be a good deal for a printer, and I shall be obliged to him. My American printers did not give up without a struggle, and in the beginning the proofs always came back to me with the dialogue printed in the old way.

The first of the farces was *The Parlour-Car*, which I wrote in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and then came *The Sleeping-Car*, which I did in Lexington, hard by the battlefield where the war of our revolution began. But there was nothing so revolutionary in it, but that it began to be played in private theatricals pretty much all over the North American continent, quite as if it were a farce of the conventional type. My railroading ended with *The Smoking-*

Car, some twenty years afterwards, which made it last instead of first in the train, as the smoker usually is in our trains. The third in the series was written, one heavenly month of May, in Verona, where an Italian friend had put me up at the Circolo Letterario, and had told me that I should find the most comfort and quiet in a certain large, round room, frequented mainly by ecclesiastics. These were for some reason then mostly in the country, but now and then one looked silently in on me, coming like a shadow and so departing, and I always felt that *The Register*, though such an arch-American love-story, and operated by an American mechanism which, I am afraid, must make it unintelligible even to English readers, ought to have been dedicated to the reverend clergy of Verona. If they would now allow me tardily to inscribe it to them, I should do so with the regard for their cloth which I never failed to feel for it in Italy, or elsewhere.

I was back in Boston when I wrote *The*

Elevator, which was founded on the adventures of a lift in a fashionable apartment-house there; and *The Garotters*, which I believe is almost identical in plot with a farce of Morton's, but which I built from the experience of a friend in Boston Common. This is the only one of all the farces which has got seriously upon the stage. A young Canadian lady, living in London, gave it London circumstance throughout, and it was played there once or twice, and then lingered for more than two years in the provincial theatres. *The Mouse-Trap*, a pure, if scandalous invention, with no foundation in fact, has been twice played in London for great and dignified charities, with an all-starcast, including such planetary splendours as Miss Terry and Mrs. Kendall, the last of whom, indeed, especially adapted it to the appreciation of the British public. In its American form it has been played in New York, together with *Evening Dress*, on like worldly occasions for like unworldly ends; and I am sometimes inclined to think that if the mantle of charity

had been extended to cover the whole multitude of my dramatic sins, it might have been to the final advantage of the stage. But this may be an illusion of mine.

Evening Dress was founded on fact, and so was *The Unexpected Guests*, and so was *A Masterpiece of Diplomacy*, and so was *A Letter of Introduction*. *The Albany Dépôt* grew from an incident of my own domestic experience, which I could not, at the time, have hoped to see ripen into its present form, so brief was then my "expectation of life" in the perilous circumstances. I believe there are several others among the pieces which are equally authentic; people, when they found I was doing that sort of thing, rather began to give me facts that they thought would work up in my hands. Once a lady gave me the fact of her having rung the fire-alarm before her door in her effort to post her letter in the alarm-box, which, with us, so much resembles a mail-box. But when I warned her that the fact would probably

letter in their praise and blame. I might extend it, if I could only remember the names of the other pieces in your edition, but the difficulties I have already had warn me to abandon the vain attempt. My letter is intended for your eye alone, and if you should print it by way of introduction to your pretty volumes, I should know that the microbe of commercialism now raging among American publishers, not to say authors, had infected the best and dearest publisher I ever knew, even so far off as Edinburgh; and I should for ever regret being the means of his demoralisation. However, I feel sure that you will burn my letter as soon as you have read it. But be careful to send me the ashes, so that I can use them for advertising purposes on this side of the sea.—Yours faithfully,

W. D. HOWELLS.

KITTERY POINT, 1906.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE PARLOUR-CAR	1
THE SLEEPING-CAR	38
THE REGISTER	83
THE ELEVATOR	138
THE GAROTTERS	188
THE MOUSE-TRAP	242
FIVE O'CLOCK TEA	284
A LIKELY STORY	319
THE ALBANY DEPÔT	362

THE PARLOUR-CAR

SCENE : A Parlour-Car on the New York Central Railroad. It is late afternoon in the early autumn, with a cloudy sunset threatening rain. The car is unoccupied save by a gentleman, who sits fronting one of the windows, with his feet in another chair ; a newspaper lies across his lap ; his hat is drawn down over his eyes, and he is apparently asleep. The rear door of the car opens, and the conductor enters with a young lady, heavily veiled, the porter coming after with her wraps and travelling-bags. The lady's air is of mingled anxiety and desperation, with a certain fierceness of movement. She casts a careless glance over the empty chairs.

CONDUCTOR : " Here 's your ticket, madam. You can have any of the places you like here, or,"—glancing at the un-

conscious gentleman, and then at the young lady,—“if you prefer, you can go and take that seat in the forward car.”

MISS LUCY GALBRAITH: “Oh, I can’t ride backwards. I’ll stay here, please. Thank you.” The porter places her things in a chair by a window, across the car from the sleeping gentleman, and she throws herself wearily into the next seat, wheels round in it, and lifting her veil gazes absently out at the landscape. Her face, which is very pretty, with a low forehead shadowed by thick blonde hair, shows the traces of tears. She makes search in her pocket for her handkerchief, which she presses to her eyes. The conductor, lingering a moment, goes out.

PORTER: “I’ll be right here, at de end of de cah, if you should happen to want anything, miss,”—making a feint of arranging the shawls and satchels. “Should you like some dese things hung up? Well, dey’ll be jus’ as well in de chair. We’s pretty late dis afternoon; more’n four hours behin’ time. Ought to been into Albany ’fore dis. Freight train off de track jus’ dis side o’ Rochester, an’ had to wait. Was you going to stop at Schenectady, miss?”

MISS GALBRAITH, absently : "At Schenectady?" After a pause, "Yes."

PORTER : "Well, that's de next station, and den de cahs don't stop ag'in till dey git to Albany. Anything else I can do for you now, miss?"

MISS GALBRAITH : "No, no, thank you, nothing." The PORTER hesitates, takes off his cap, and scratches his head with a murmur of embarrassment. MISS GALBRAITH looks up at him inquiringly and then suddenly takes out her porte-monnaie, and fees him.

PORTER : "Thank you, miss, thank you. If you want anything at all, miss, I'm right dere at de end of de cah." He goes out by the narrow passage-way beside the smaller enclosed parlour. MISS GALBRAITH looks askance at the sleeping gentleman, and then, rising, goes to the large mirror to pin her veil, which has become loosened from her hat. She gives a little start at sight of the gentleman in the mirror, but arranges her headgear, and returning to her place looks out of the window again. After a little while she moves about uneasily in her chair, then leans forward, and tries to raise her window ; she lifts it partly up, when the catch slips from her fingers, and the window falls shut again with a crash.

MISS GALBRAITH: "Oh *dear*, how provoking! I suppose I must call the porter." She rises from her seat, but on attempting to move away she finds that the skirt of her polonaise has been caught in the falling window. She pulls at it, and then tries to lift the window again, but the cloth has wedged it in, and she cannot stir it. "Well, I certainly think this is beyond endurance! Porter! Ah,—Porter! Oh, he'll never hear me in the racket that these wheels are making! I wish they'd stop,—I—" The gentleman stirs in his chair, lifts his head, listens, takes his feet down from the other seat, rises abruptly, and comes to MISS GALBRAITH'S side.

MR. ALLEN RICHARDS: "Will you allow me to open the window for you?" Starting back, "Miss Galbraith!"

MISS GALBRAITH: "Al—Mr. Richards!" There is a silence for some moments, in which they remain looking at each other; then,—

MR. RICHARDS: "Lucy—"

MISS GALBRAITH: "I forbid you to address me in that way, Mr. Richards."

MR. RICHARDS: "Why, you were just going to call me Allen!"

MISS GALBRAITH : " That was an accident, you know very well,—an impulse—"

MR. RICHARDS : " Well, so is this."

MISS GALBRAITH : " Of which you ought to be ashamed to take advantage. I wonder at your presumption in speaking to me at all. It's quite idle, I can assure you. Everything is at an end between us. It seems that I bore with you too long ; but I'm thankful that I had the spirit to act at last, and to act in time. And now that chance has thrown us together, I trust that you will not force your conversation upon me. No gentleman would, and I have always given you credit for thinking yourself a gentleman. I request that you will not speak to me."

MR. RICHARDS : " You've spoken ten words to me for every one of mine to you. But I won't annoy you. I can't believe it, Lucy ; I can *not* believe it. It seems like some rascally dream, and if I had had any sleep since it happened, I should think I *had* dreamed it."

MISS GALBRAITH : " Oh ! You were sleeping soundly enough when I got into the car !"

MR. RICHARDS : " I own it ; I was perfectly used up, and I *had* dropped off."

MISS GALBRAITH, scornfully: "Then perhaps you *have* dreamed it."

MR. RICHARDS: "I'll think so till you tell me again that our engagement is broken; that the faithful love of years is to go for nothing; that you dismiss me with cruel insult, without one word of explanation, without a word of intelligible accusation, even. It's too much! I've been thinking it all over and over, and I can't make head or tail of it. I meant to see you again as soon as we got to town, and implore you to hear me. Come, it's a mighty serious matter, Lucy. I'm not a man to put on heroics and that; but *I* believe it'll play the very deuce with me, Lucy,—that is to say, Miss Galbraith,—I do indeed. It'll give me a low opinion of woman."

MISS GALBRAITH, averting her face: "Oh, a very high opinion of woman you have had!"

MR. RICHARDS, with sentiment: "Well, there was one woman whom I thought a perfect angel."

MISS GALBRAITH: "Indeed! May I ask her name?"

MR. RICHARDS, with a forlorn smile: "I shall be obliged to describe her somewhat formally as—Miss Galbraith."

MISS GALBRAITH: "Mr. Richards!"

MR. RICHARDS: "Why, you've just forbidden me to say *Lucy*! You must tell me, dearest, what I have done to offend you. The worst criminals are not condemned unheard, and I've always thought you were merciful if not just. And now I only ask you to be just."

MISS GALBRAITH, looking out of the window: "You know very well what you've done. You can't expect me to humiliate myself by putting your offence into words."

MR. RICHARDS: "Upon my soul, I don't know what you mean! I *don't* know what I've done. When you came at me, last night, with my ring and presents and other little traps, you might have knocked me down with the lightest of the lot. I was perfectly dazed; I couldn't say anything before you were off, and all I could do was to hope that you'd be more like yourself in the morning. And in the morning, when I came round to Mrs. Philips's, I found you were gone, and I came after you by the next train."

MISS GALBRAITH: "Mr. Richards, your personal history for the last twenty-four hours is a matter of perfect indifference to me, as it shall be for the next twenty-four

hundred years. I see that you are resolved to annoy me, and since *you* will not leave the car, *I* must do so." She rises haughtily from her seat, but the imprisoned skirt of her polonaise twitches her abruptly back into her chair. She bursts into tears. "Oh, what *shall* I do?"

MR. RICHARDS, dryly: "You shall do whatever you like, Miss Galbraith, when I've set you free; for I see your dress is caught in the window. When it's once out, I'll shut the window, and you can call the porter to raise it." He leans forward over her chair, and while she shrinks back the length of her tether, he tugs at the window-fastening. "I can't get at it. Would you be so good as to stand up,—all you can?" MISS GALBRAITH stands up, droopingly, and MR. RICHARDS makes a movement towards her, and then falls back. "No, that won't do. Please sit down again." He goes round her chair and tries to get at the window from that side. "I can't get any purchase on it. Why don't you cut out that piece?" MISS GALBRAITH stares at him in dumb amazement. "Well, I don't see what we're to do. I'll go and get the porter." He goes to the end of the car, and returns. "I can't find the porter,—

he must be in one of the other cars. But"—brightening with the fortunate conception—"I've just thought of something. Will it unbutton?"

MISS GALBRAITH: "Unbutton!"

MR. RICHARDS: "Yes; this garment of yours."

MISS GALBRAITH: "My polonaise?" Inquiringly, "Yes."

MR. RICHARDS: "Well, then, it's a very simple matter. If you will just take it off I can easily—"

MISS GALBRAITH, faintly: "I can't. A polonaise isn't like an *overcoat*—"

MR. RICHARDS, with dismay: "Oh! Well, then—" He remains thinking a moment in hopeless perplexity.

MISS GALBRAITH, with polite ceremony: "The porter will be back soon. Don't trouble yourself any further about it, please. I shall do very well."

MR. RICHARDS, without heeding her: "If you could kneel on that foot-cushion, and face the window—"

MISS GALBRAITH, kneeling promptly: "So?"

MR. RICHARDS: "Yes, and now"—kneeling beside her—"if you'll allow me to—to get at the window-catch,"—he stretches

both arms forward; she shrinks from his right into his left, and then back again,—"and pull, while I raise the window—"

MISS GALBRAITH: "Yes, yes; but do hurry, please. If any one saw us, I don't know what they would think. It's perfectly ridiculous!"—pulling. "It's caught in the corner of the window, between the frame and the sash, and it won't come! Is my hair troubling you? Is it in your eyes?"

MR. RICHARDS: "It's in my eyes, but it isn't troubling me. Am I inconveniencing you?"

MISS GALBRAITH: "Oh, not at all."

MR. RICHARDS: "Well, now then pull hard!" He lifts the window with a great effort; the polonaise comes free with a start, and she strikes violently against him. In supporting the shock he cannot forbear catching her for an instant to his heart. She frees herself, and starts indignantly to her feet.

MISS GALBRAITH: "Oh, what a cowardly—subterfuge!"

MR. RICHARDS: "Cowardly? You've no idea how much courage it took." Miss GALBRAITH puts her handkerchief to her face, and sobs. "Oh, don't cry! Bless my heart,—I'm sorry I did it! But you

know how dearly I love you, Lucy, though I do think you've been cruelly unjust. I told you I never should love any one else, and I never shall. I couldn't help it; upon my soul, I couldn't. Nobody could. Don't let it vex you, my—" He approaches her.

MISS GALBRAITH: "Please do not touch me, sir! You have no longer any right whatever to do so."

MR. RICHARDS: "You misinterpret a very inoffensive gesture. I have no idea of touching you, but I hope I may be allowed, as a special favour, to—pick up my hat, which you are in the act of stepping on." MISS GALBRAITH hastily turns, and strikes the hat with her whirling skirts; it rolls to the other side of the parlour, and MR. RICHARDS, who goes after it, utters an ironical "Thanks!" He brushes it, and puts it on, looking at her where she has again seated herself at the window with her back to him, and continues, "As for any further molestation from me—"

MISS GALBRAITH: "If you *will* talk to me—"

MR. RICHARDS: "Excuse me, I am not talking to you."

MISS GALBRAITH: "What were you doing?"

MR. RICHARDS: "I was beginning to think aloud. I—I was soliloquising. I suppose I may be allowed to soliloquise!"

MISS GALBRAITH, very coldly: "You can do what you like."

MR. RICHARDS: "Unfortunately that's just what I can't do. If I could do as I liked, I should ask you a single question."

MISS GALBRAITH, after a moment: "Well, sir, you may ask your question." She remains as before, with her chin in her hand, looking tearfully out of the window; her face is turned from MR. RICHARD, who hesitates a moment before he speaks.

MR. RICHARDS: "I wish to ask you just this, Miss Galbraith: if you couldn't ride backwards in the other car, why do you ride backwards in this?"

MISS GALBRAITH, burying her face in her handkerchief, and sobbing: "Oh, oh, oh! This is too bad!"

MR. RICHARDS: "Oh, come now, Lucy. It breaks my heart to hear you going on so, and all for nothing. Be a little merciful to both of us, and listen to me. I've no doubt I can explain everything if I once

understand it, but it's pretty hard explaining a thing if you don't understand it yourself. Do turn round. I know it makes you sick to ride in that way, and if you don't want to face me—there!"—wheeling in his chair so as to turn his back upon her—"you needn't. Though it's rather trying to a fellow's politeness, not to mention his other feelings. Now, what in the name"—

PORTER, who at this moment enters with his step-ladder, and begins to light the lamps: "Going pretty slow ag'in, sah."

MR. RICHARDS: "Yes; what's the trouble?"

PORTER: "Well, I don't know exactly, sah. Something de matter with de locomotive. We shan't be into Albany much 'fore eight o'clock."

MR. RICHARDS: "What's the next station?"

PORTER: "Schenectady."

MR. RICHARDS: "Is the whole train as empty as this car?"

PORTER, laughing: "Well, no, sah. Fact is, *dis* cah don't belong on *dis* train. It's a Pullman that we hitched on when you got in, and we's taking it along for one of de Eastern roads. We let you in 'cause de

Drawing-rooms was all full. Same with de lady,"—looking sympathetically at her, as he takes his steps to go out. "Can I do anything for you now, miss?"

MISS GALBRAITH, plaintively: "No, thank you; nothing whatever." She has turned while MR. RICHARDS and THE PORTER have been speaking, and now faces the back of the former, but her veil is drawn closely. THE PORTER goes out.

MR. RICHARDS, wheeling round so as to confront her: "I wish you would speak to me half as kindly as you do to that ducky, Lucy."

MISS GALBRAITH: "*He is a gentleman!*"

MR. RICHARDS: "He is an urbane and well-informed nobleman. At any rate, he's a man and a brother. But so am I." MISS GALBRAITH does not reply, and after a pause MR. RICHARDS resumes. "Talking of gentlemen, I recollect once, coming up on the day-boat to Poughkeepsie, there was a poor devil of a tipsy man kept following a young fellow about, and annoying him to death—trying to fight him, as a tipsy man will, and insisting that the young fellow had insulted him. By and by he lost his balance and went overboard, and the other jumped after him and fished him

out." Sensation on the part of MISS GALBRAITH, who stirs uneasily in her chair, looks out of the window, then looks at MR. RICHARDS, and drops her head. "There was a young lady on board, who had seen the whole thing—a very charming young lady indeed, with pale blonde hair growing very thick over her forehead, and dark eyelashes to the sweetest blue eyes in the world. Well, this young lady's papa was amongst those who came up to say civil things to the young fellow when he got aboard again, and to ask the honour—he said the *honour*—of his acquaintance. And when he came out of his state-room in dry clothes, this infatuated old gentleman was waiting for him and took him and introduced him to his wife and daughter; and the daughter said, with tears in her eyes, and a perfectly intoxicating impulsiveness, that it was the grandest and the most heroic and the noblest thing that she had ever seen, and she should always be a better girl for having seen it. Excuse me, Miss Galbraith, for troubling you with these facts of a personal history, which, as you say, is a matter of perfect indifference to you. The young fellow didn't think at the time he had done anything extraordinary; but I don't suppose

he *did* expect to live to have the same girl tell him he was no gentleman."

MISS GALBRAITH, wildly: "O Allen, Allen! You *know* I think you are a gentleman, and I always did!"

MR. RICHARDS, languidly: "Oh, I merely had your word for it, just now, that you didn't." Tenderly, "Will you hear me, Lucy?"

MISS GALBRAITH, faintly: "Yes."

MR. RICHARDS: "Well, what is it I've done? Will you tell me if I guess right?"

MISS GALBRAITH, with dignity: "I am in no humour for jesting, Allen. And I can assure you that though I consent to hear what you have to say, or ask, *nothing* will change my determination. All is over between us."

MR. RICHARDS: "Yes, I understand that, perfectly. I am now asking merely for general information. I do not expect you to relent, and, in fact, I should consider it rather frivolous if you did. No. What I have always admired in your character, Lucy, is a firm, logical consistency; a clearness of mental vision that leaves no side of a subject unsearched; and an unwavering constancy of purpose. You may say that these traits are characteristic of *all* women;

but they are pre-eminently characteristic of you, Lucy." MISS GALBRAITH looks askance at him, to make out whether he is in earnest or not; he continues, with a perfectly serious air. "And I know now that if you're offended with me, it's for no trivial cause." She stirs uncomfortably in her chair. "What I have done I can't imagine, but it must be something monstrous, since it has made life with me appear so impossible that you are ready to fling away your own happiness—for I know you *did* love me, Lucy—and destroy mine. I will begin with the worst thing I can think of. Was it because I danced so much with Fanny Watervliet?"

MISS GALBRAITH, indignantly: "How can you insult me by supposing that I could be jealous of such a *perfect* little goose as that? No, Allen! Whatever I think of you, I *still* respect you too much for *that*."

MR. RICHARDS: "I'm glad to hear that there are yet depths to which you think me incapable of descending, and that Miss Watervliet is one of them. I will now take a little higher ground. Perhaps you think I flirted with Mrs. Dawes. I thought myself, that the thing might begin to have that appearance, but I give you my word of

honour that as soon as the idea occurred to me, I dropped her—rather rudely, too. The trouble was, don't you know, that I felt so perfectly safe with a *married* friend of yours. I couldn't be hanging about you all the time, and I was afraid I might vex you if I went with the other girls; and I didn't know what to do."

MISS GALBRAITH: I think you behaved rather silly. Giggling so much with her. But—"

MR. RICHARDS: "I own it, I know it was silly. But—"

MISS GALBRAITH: "It wasn't that; it wasn't that!"

MR. RICHARDS: "Was it my forgetting to bring you those things from your mother?"

MISS GALBRAITH: "No!"

MR. RICHARDS: "Was it because I hadn't given up smoking yet?"

MISS GALBRAITH: "You *know* I never asked you to give up smoking. It was entirely your own proposition."

MR. RICHARDS: "That's true. That's what made me so easy about it. I knew I could leave it off *any* time. Well, I will not disturb you any longer, Miss Galbraith." He throws his overcoat across his

arm, and takes up his travelling-bag. "I have failed to guess your fatal—conundrum; and I have no longer any excuse for remaining. I am going into the smoking-car. Shall I send the porter to you for anything?"

MISS GALBRAITH: "No, thanks." She puts up her handkerchief to her face.

MR. RICHARDS: "Lucy, do you send me away?"

MISS GALBRAITH behind her handkerchief: "You were going, yourself."

MR. RICHARDS, over his shoulder: "Shall I come back?"

MISS GALBRAITH: "I have no right to drive you from the car."

MR. RICHARDS, coming back, and sitting down in the chair nearest her: "Lucy, dearest, tell me what's the matter."

MISS GALBRAITH: "O Allen! your not *knowing* makes it all the more hopeless and killing. It shows me that we *must* part; that you would go on, breaking my heart, and grinding me into the dust as long as we lived." She sobs. "It shows me that you never understood me, and you never will. I know you're good and kind and all that, but that only makes your not understanding me so much the worse. I do

it quite as much for your sake as my own, Allen."

MR. RICHARDS: "I'd much rather you wouldn't put yourself out on my account."

MISS GALBRAITH, without regarding him: "If you could mortify me before a whole roomful of people, as you did last night, what could I expect after marriage but continual insult?"

MR. RICHARDS, in amazement: "*How* did I mortify you? I thought that I treated you with all the tenderness and affection that a decent regard for the feelings of others would allow. I was ashamed to find I couldn't keep away from you."

MISS GALBRAITH: "Oh, you were *attentive* enough, Allen; nobody denies that. *Attentive* enough in non-essentials. Oh, yes!"

MR. RICHARDS: "Well, what vital matters did I fail in? I'm sure I can't remember."

MISS GALBRAITH: "I dare say! I dare say they won't appear vital to you, Allen. Nothing does. And if I had told you, I should have been met with ridicule, I suppose. But I knew *better* than to tell; I respected myself too *much*."

MR. RICHARDS: "But now you mustn't respect yourself *quite* so much, dearest.

And I promise you I won't laugh at the most serious thing. I'm in no humour for it. If it were a matter of life and death, even, I can assure you that it wouldn't bring a smile to my countenance. No, indeed! If you expect me to laugh, *now*, you must say something particularly funny."

MISS GALBRAITH: "I was not going to say anything *funny*, as you call it, and I will say nothing at all, if you talk in that way."

MR. RICHARDS: "Well, I won't, then. But do you know what I suspect, Lucy? I wouldn't mention it to everybody, but I will to you—in strict confidence: I suspect that you're rather ashamed of your grievance, if you have any. I suspect it's nothing at all."

MISS GALBRAITH, very sternly at first, with a rising hysterical inflection: "Nothing, Allen! Do you call it *nothing*, to have Mrs. Dawes come out with all that about your accident on your way up the river, and ask me if it didn't frighten me terribly to hear of it, even after it was all over; and I had to say you hadn't told me a word of it? 'Why, Lucy!'"—angrily mimicking Mrs. Dawes,—"'you must teach him better than that. I make Mr. Dawes tell *me* every-

didn't like embroidered cigar-cases, when you'd just *told* me that you did, and let me be such a fool as to commence one for you ; but I'm thankful to say *that* went into the fire,—oh yes, *instantly* ! And I dare say you've forgotten that you didn't tell me your brother's engagement was to be kept, and let me come out with it that night at the Ridges', and then looked perfectly aghast, so that everybody thought I had been blabbing ! Time and again, Allen, you have made me suffer agonies, yes, *agonies* ; but your power to do so is at an end. I am free and happy at last." She weeps bitterly.

MR. RICHARDS, quietly : " Yes, I *had* forgotten those crimes, and I suppose many similar atrocities. I own it, I *am* forgetful and careless. I was wrong about those things. I ought to have told you why I said that to Miss Morris : I was afraid she was going to work me one. As to that accident I told Mrs. Dawes of, it wasn't worth mentioning. Our boat simply walked over a sloop in the night, and nobody was hurt. I shouldn't have thought twice about it, if she hadn't happened to brag of their passing close to an iceberg on their way home from Europe ; then I trotted out *my*

pretty-near disaster as a match for hers,—confound her! I wish the iceberg had sunk them! Only it wouldn't have sunk her,—she's so light; she'd have gone bobbing about all over the Atlantic Ocean, like a cork; she's got a perfect life-preserver in that mind of hers." MISS GALBRAITH gives a little laugh, and then a little moan. "But since you are happy, I will not repine, Miss Galbraith. I don't pretend to be very happy myself, but then, I don't deserve it. Since you are ready to let an absolutely unconscious offence on my part cancel all the past; since you let my devoted love weigh as nothing against the momentary pique that a malicious little rattle-pate—she was vexed at my leaving her—could make you feel, and choose to gratify a wicked resentment at the cost of any suffering to me, why, *I* can be glad and happy too." With rising anger, "Miss Galbraith. All is over between us. You can go! I renounce you!"

MISS GALBRAITH, springing fiercely to her feet: "Go, indeed! Renounce me! Be so good as to remember that you haven't got me to renounce!"

MR. RICHARDS: "Well, it's all the same thing. I'd renounce you if I had. Good

evening, Miss Galbraith. I will send back your presents as soon as I get to town ; it won't be necessary to acknowledge them. I hope we may never meet again." He goes out of the door towards the front of the car, but returns directly, and glances uneasily at MISS GALBRAITH, who remains with her handkerchief pressed to her eyes. "Ah—a—that is—I shall be obliged to intrude upon you again. The fact is—"

MISS GALBRAITH, anxiously : "Why, the cars have stopped ! Are we at Schenectady ?"

MR. RICHARDS : "Well, no ; not *exactly* ; not exactly at *Schenectady*—"

MISS GALBRAITH : "Then what station is this ? Have they carried me by ?" Observing his embarrassment, "Allen, what is the matter ? What has happened ? Tell me instantly ! Are we off the track ? Have we run into another train ? Have we broken through a bridge ? Shall we be burnt alive ? Tell me, Allen, tell me,—I can bear it !—are we telescoped ?" She wrings her hands in terror.

MR. RICHARDS, unsympathetically : "Nothing of the kind has happened. This car has simply come uncoupled, and the rest of the train has gone on ahead, and left us

standing on the track, nowhere in particular." He leans back in his chair, and wheels it round from her.

MISS GALBRAITH, mortified, yet anxious :
" Well ? "

MR. RICHARDS : " Well, until they miss us, and run back to pick us up, I shall be obliged to ask your indulgence. I will try not to disturb you ; I would go out and stand on the platform, but it's raining. "

MISS GALBRAITH, listening to the rainfall on the roof : " Why, so it is ! " Timidly,
" Did you notice when the car stopped ? "

MR. RICHARDS : " No. " He rises and goes out at the rear door, comes back, and sits down again.

MISS GALBRAITH, rises, and goes to the large mirror to wipe away her tears. She glances at MR. RICHARDS, who does not move. She sits down in a seat nearer him than the chair she has left. After some faint murmurs and hesitations, she asks,
" Will you please tell me why you went out just now ? "

MR. RICHARDS, with indifference : " Yes. I went to see if the rear signal was out. "

MISS GALBRAITH, after another hesitation : " Why ? "

MR. RICHARDS : " Because, if it wasn't

out, some train might run into us from that direction."

"MISS GALBRAITH, tremulously: "Oh! And was it?"

MR. RICHARDS, dryly: "Yes."

MISS GALBRAITH returns to her former place, with a wounded air, and for a moment neither speaks. Finally she asks very meekly, "And there's no danger from the front?"

MR. RICHARDS, coldly: "No."

MISS GALBRAITH, after some little noises and movements meant to catch MR. RICHARDS'S attention: "Of course I never meant to imply that you were *intentionally* careless or forgetful."

MR. RICHARDS, still very coldly: "Thank you."

MISS GALBRAITH: "I always did justice to your good-heartedness, Allen; you're perfectly lovely that way; and I know that you would be sorry if you *knew* you had wounded my feelings, however accidentally." She droops her head so as to catch a side-long glimpse of his face, and sighs, while she nervously pinches the top of her parasol, resting the point on the floor. MR. RICHARDS makes no answer. "That about the cigar-case might have been a mistake;

I saw that myself, and, as you explain it, why, it was certainly very kind and very creditable to—to your thoughtfulness. It *was* thoughtful!”

MR. RICHARDS: “I am grateful for your good opinion.”

MISS GALBRAITH: “But do you think it was exactly—it was quite—nice, not to tell me that your brother’s engagement was to be kept, when you know, Allen, I can’t bear to blunder in such things?” Tenderly, “*Do you? You can’t say it was?*”

MR. RICHARDS: “I never said it was.”

MISS GALBRAITH, plaintively: “No, Allen. That’s what I always admired in your character. You always owned up. Don’t you think it’s easier for men to own up than it is for women?”

MR. RICHARDS: “I don’t know. I never knew any woman to do it.”

MISS GALBRAITH: “Oh yes, Allen! You know I *often* own up.”

MR. RICHARDS: “No, I don’t.”

MISS GALBRAITH: “Oh, how can you bear to say so? When I’m rash, or anything of that kind, you know I acknowledge it.”

MR. RICHARDS: “Do you acknowledge it now?”

MISS GALBRAITH: “Why, how can I,

when I haven't *been* rash? *What* have I been rash about?"

MR. RICHARDS: "About the cigar-case, for example."

MISS GALBRAITH: "Oh! *that*! That was a great while ago! I thought you meant something quite recent." A sound as of the approaching train is heard in the distance. She gives a start, and then leaves her chair again for one a little nearer his. "I thought perhaps you meant about—last night."

MR. RICHARDS: "Well."

MISS GALBRAITH, very judicially: "I don't think it was *rash*, exactly. No, not *rash*. It might not have been very *kind* not to—to—trust you more, when I knew that you didn't mean anything; but— No, I took the only course I could. *Nobody* could have done differently under the circumstances. But if I caused you any pain, I'm very sorry; oh yes, very sorry indeed. But I was not precipitate, and I know I did right. At least I *tried* to act for the best. Don't you believe I did?"

MR. RICHARDS: "Why, if you have no doubt upon the subject, my opinion is of no consequence."

MISS GALBRAITH: "Yes. But what do

you think? If you think differently, and can make me see it differently, oughtn't you to do so?"

MR. RICHARDS: "I don't see why. As you say, all is over between us."

MISS GALBRAITH: "Yes." After a pause, "I should suppose you would care enough for *yourself* to wish me to look at the matter from the right point of view."

MR. RICHARDS: "I don't."

MISS GALBRAITH, becoming more and more uneasy as the noise of the approaching train grows louder: "I think *you* have been very quick with *me* at times, quite as quick as I could have been with you last night." The noise is more distinctly heard. "I'm sure that if I could once see it as you do, *no* one would be more willing to do anything in their power to atone for their rashness. Of course I know that everything is over."

MR. RICHARDS: "As to that, I have your word; and, in view of the fact, perhaps this analysis of motive, of character, however interesting on general grounds, is a little—"

MISS GALBRAITH, with sudden violence: "Say it, and take your revenge! I have put myself at your feet, and you do right to trample on me! Oh, this is what women

may expect when they trust to men's generosity ! Well, it is over now, and I'm thankful, thankful ! Cruel, suspicious, vindictive, you're all alike, and I'm glad that I'm no longer subject to your heartless caprices. And I don't care what happens after this, I shall always— Oh ! You're sure it's from the front, Allen ? Are you sure the rear signal is out ?”

MR. RICHARDS, relenting : “ Yes, but if it will ease your mind, I'll go and look again.” He rises, and starts towards the rear door.

MISS GALBRAITH, quickly : “ Oh no ! Don't go ! I can't bear to be left alone !” The sound of the approaching train continually increases in volume. “ Oh, isn't it coming very, very, *very* fast ?”

MR. RICHARDS : “ No, no ! Don't be frightened.”

MISS GALBRAITH, running towards the rear door : “ Oh, I *must* get out ! It will kill me, I know it will. Come with me ! Do, do !” He runs after her, and her voice is heard at the rear of the car. “ Oh, the outside door is locked, and we are trapped, trapped, trapped ! Oh, quick ! Let's try the door at the other end.” They re-enter the parlour, and the roar of the train

announces that it is upon them. "No, no! It's too late, it's too late! I'm a wicked, wicked girl, and this is all to punish me! Oh, it's coming, it's coming at full speed!" He remains bewildered, confronting her. She utters a wild cry, and as the train strikes the car with a violent concussion, she flings herself into his arms. "There, there! Forgive me, Allen! Let us die together, my own, own love!" She hangs fainting on his breast. Voices are heard without, and after a little delay THE PORTER comes in with a lantern.

PORTER: "Rather more of a jah than we meant to give you, sah! We had to run down pretty quick after we missed you, and the rain made the track a little slippery. Lady much frightened?"

MISS GALBRAITH, disengaging herself: "Oh, not at all! Not in the least. We thought it was a train coming from behind, and going to run into us, and so—we—I—"

PORTER: "Not quite so bad as that. We'll be into Schenectady in a few minutes, miss. I'll come for your things." He goes out at the other door.

MISS GALBRAITH, in a fearful whisper: "Allen! What will he ever think of us? I'm sure he saw us!"

MR. RICHARDS: "I don't know what he'll think *now*. He *did* think you were frightened; but you told him you were not. However, it isn't important what he thinks. Probably he thinks I'm your long-lost brother. It had a kind of family look."

MISS GALBRAITH: "Ridiculous!"

MR. RICHARDS: "Why, he'd never suppose that I was a jilted lover of yours!"

MISS GALBRAITH, ruefully: "No."

MR. RICHARDS: "Come, Lucy,"—taking her hand,—“you wished to die with me, a moment ago. Don't you think you can make one more effort to live with me? I won't take advantage of words spoken in mortal peril, but I suppose you were in earnest when you called me your own—own—” Her head droops; he folds her in his arms a moment, then she starts away from him, as if something had suddenly occurred to her.

MISS GALBRAITH: "Allen, where are you going?"

MR. RICHARDS: "Going? Upon my soul, I haven't the least idea."

MISS GALBRAITH: "Where *were* you going?"

MR. RICHARDS: "Oh, I *was* going to Albany."

MISS GALBRAITH: "Well, don't! Aunt

Mary is expecting me here at Schenectady,—I telegraphed her,—and I want you to stop here, too, and we'll refer the whole matter to her. She's such a wise old head. I'm not sure—"

MR. RICHARDS: "What?"

MISS GALBRAITH, demurely: "That I'm good enough for you."

MR. RICHARDS, starting, in burlesque of her movement, as if a thought had struck *him*: "Lucy! how came you on this train when you left Syracuse on the morning express?"

MISS GALBRAITH, faintly: "I waited over a train at Utica." She sinks into a chair, and averts her face.

MR. RICHARDS: "May I ask why?"

MISS GALBRAITH, more faintly still: "I don't like to tell. I—"

MR. RICHARDS, coming and standing in front of her, with his hands in his pockets: "Look me in the eye, Lucy!" She drops her veil over her face, and looks up at him. "Did you—did you expect to find *me* on this train?"

MISS GALBRAITH: "I was afraid it never *would* get along,—it was so late!"

MR. RICHARDS: "Don't—tergiversate."

MISS GALBRAITH: "Don't *what*?"

MR. RICHARDS : "Fib."

MISS GALBRAITH : "Not for worlds !"

MR. RICHARDS : "How did you know I was in this car ?"

MISS GALBRAITH : "Must I ? I thought I saw you through the window ; and then I made sure it was you when I went to pin my veil on,—I saw you in the mirror."

MR. RICHARDS, after a little silence : "Miss Galbraith, do you want to know what *you* are ?"

MISS GALBRAITH, softly : "Yes, Allen."

MR. RICHARDS : "You're a humbug !"

MISS GALBRAITH, springing from her seat, and confronting him. "So are you ! You pretended to be asleep !"

MR. RICHARDS : "I—I—I was taken by surprise. I had to take time to think."

MISS GALBRAITH : "So did I."

MR. RICHARDS : "And you thought it would be a good plan to get your polonaise caught in the window ?"

MISS GALBRAITH, hiding her face on his shoulder : "No, no, Allen ! That I never *will* admit. *No woman would !*"

MR. RICHARDS : "Oh, I dare say !" After a pause : "Well, I am a poor, weak, helpless man, with no one to advise me or counsel me, and I have been cruelly deceived

How could you, Lucy, how could you? I can never get over this." He drops his head upon her shoulder.

MISS GALBRAITH, starting away again, and looking about the car: "Allen, I have an idea! Do you suppose Mr. Pullman could be induced to *sell* this car?"

MR. RICHARDS: "Why?"

MISS GALBRAITH: "Why, because I think it's perfectly lovely, and I should like to live in it always. It could be fitted up for a sort of summer-house, don't you know, and we could have it in the garden, and you could smoke in it."

MR. RICHARDS: "Admirable! It would look just like a travelling photographic saloon. No, Lucy, we won't buy it; we will simply keep it as a precious souvenir, a sacred memory, a beautiful dream,—and let it go on fulfilling its destiny all the same."

PORTER, entering, and gathering up Miss GALBRAITH's things: "Be at Schenectady in half a minute, miss. Won't have much time."

MISS GALBRAITH, rising, and adjusting her dress, and then looking about the car, while she passes her hand through her lover's arm: "Oh, I do *hate* to leave it. Farewell, you dear, kind,

good, lovely car! May you never have another accident!" She kisses her hand to the car, upon which they both look back as they slowly leave it.

MR. RICHARDS, kissing his hand in the like manner: "Good-bye, sweet chariot! May you never carry any but bridal couples!"

MISS GALBRAITH: "Or engaged ones!"

MR. RICHARDS: "Or husbands going home to their wives!"

MISS GALBRAITH: "Or wives hastening to their husbands."

MR. RICHARDS: "Or young ladies who have waited one train over, so as to be with the young men they hate."

MISS GALBRAITH: "Or young men who are so indifferent that they pretend to be asleep when the young ladies come in!" They pause at the door and look back again. "And must I leave thee, Paradise?" They both kiss their hands to the car again, and, their faces being very close together, they impulsively kiss each other. Then MISS GALBRAITH throws back her head, and solemnly confronts him. "Only think, Allen! If this car hadn't broken *its* engagement, we might never have mended ours."

THE SLEEPING-CAR

I

SCENE: One side of a sleeping-car on the Boston and Albany Road. The curtains are drawn before most of the berths: from the hooks and rods hang hats, bonnets, bags, bandboxes, umbrellas, and other travelling-gear; on the floor are boots of both sexes, set out for THE PORTER to black. THE PORTER is making up the beds in the upper and lower berths adjoining the seats on which a young mother, slender and pretty, with a baby asleep on the seat beside her, and a stout old lady, sit confronting each other—MRS. AGNES ROBERTS and her AUNT MARY.

MRS. ROBERTS: "Do you always take down your back hair, aunty?"

AUNT MARY: "No, never, child; at

least not since I had such a fright about it once, coming on from New York. It's all well enough to take down your back hair if it *is* yours; but if it isn't, your head's the best place for it. Now, as I buy mine of Madame Pierrot—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Don't you *wish* she wouldn't advertise it as *human* hair? It sounds so pokerish—like human flesh, you know."

AUNT MARY: "Why, she couldn't call it *inhuman* hair, my dear."

MRS. ROBERTS, thoughtfully: "No—just *hair*."

AUNT MARY: "Then people might think it was for mattresses. But, as I was saying, I took it off that night, and tucked it safely away, as I supposed, in my pocket, and I slept sweetly till about midnight, when I happened to open my eyes, and saw something long and black crawl off my bed and slip under the berth. *Such* a shriek as I gave, my dear! 'A snake! a snake! oh, a snake!' And everybody began talking at once, and some of the gentlemen swearing, and the porter came running with the poker to kill it; and all the while it was that ridiculous switch of mine, that had worked out of my pocket. And glad enough I was

to grab it up before anybody saw it, and say I must have been dreaming."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Why, aunty, how funny! How *could* you suppose a serpent could get on board a sleeping-car, of all places in the world?"

AUNT MARY: "That was the perfect absurdity of it."

THE PORTER: "Berths ready now, ladies."

MRS. ROBERTS, to THE PORTER, who walks away to the end of the car, and sits down near the door: "Oh, thank you!—Aunty, do you feel nervous the least bit?"

AUNT MARY: "Nervous? No. Why?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Well, I don't know. I suppose I've been worked up a little about meeting Willis, and wondering how he'll look, and all. We can't *know* each other, of course. It doesn't stand to reason that if he's been out there for twelve years, ever since I was a child, though we've corresponded regularly—at least *I* have—that he could recognise me; not at the first glance, you know. He'll have a full beard; and then I've got married, and here's the baby. Oh, *no*! he'll never guess who it is in the world. Photographs really amount to nothing in such a case. I wish we were at home, and it was all over. I wish he had

written some particulars, instead of telegraphing from Ogden, 'Be with you on the 7 A.M., Wednesday.'"

AUNT MARY: "Californians always telegraph, my dear; they never think of writing. It isn't expensive enough, and it doesn't make your blood run cold enough, to get a letter, and so they send you one of those yellow despatches whenever they can, —those printed in a long string, if possible, so that you'll be *sure* to die before you get to the end of it. I suppose your brother has fallen into all those ways, and says 'reckon' and 'ornary' and 'which the same,' just like one of Mr. Bret Harte's characters."

MRS. ROBERTS: "But it isn't exactly our not knowing each other, aunty, that's worrying me; that's something that could be got over in time. What is simply driving me distracted is Willis and Edward meeting there when I'm away from home. Oh, how *could* I be away! and why *couldn't* Willis have given us fair warning? I would have hurried from the ends of the earth to meet him. I don't believe poor Edward ever saw a Californian; and he's so quiet and preoccupied, I'm sure he'd never get on with Willis. And if Willis is the least

loud, he wouldn't like Edward. Not that I suppose he *is* loud ; but I don't believe he knows anything about literary men. But you can see, aunty, can't you, how very anxious I must be? Don't you see that I ought to have been there when Willis and Edward met, so as to—to—well, to *break* them to each other, don't you know?"

AUNT MARY: "Oh, you needn't be troubled about that, Agnes. I dare say they've got on perfectly well together. Very likely they're sitting down to the unwholesomest hot supper this instant that the ingenuity of man could invent."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, do you *think* they are, aunty? Oh, if I could *only* believe they were sitting down to a hot supper together now, I should be *so* happy! They'd be sure to get on if they were. There's nothing like eating to make men friendly with each other. Don't you know, at receptions, how they never have anything to say to each other till the escalloped oysters and the chicken salad appear; and then how sweet they are as soon as they've helped the ladies to ice? Oh, thank you, *thank* you, aunty, for thinking of the hot supper! It's such a relief to my mind! You can understand, can't you, aunty dear,

how anxious I must have been to have my only brother and my only—my husband—get on nicely together? My life would be a wreck, simply a wreck, if they didn't. And Willis and I not having seen each other since I was a child makes it all the worse. I do *hope* they're sitting down to a hot supper."

AN ANGRY VOICE from the next berth but one: "I wish people in sleeping-cars—"

A VOICE from the berth beyond that: "You're mistaken in your premises, sir. This is a waking-car. Ladies, go on, and oblige an eager listener." Sensation, and smothered laughter from the other berths.

MRS. ROBERTS, after a space of terrified silence, in a loud whisper to her AUNT: "What horrid things! But now we really must go to bed. It *was* too bad to keep talking. I'd no idea my voice was getting so loud. Which berth will you have, aunty! I'd better take the upper one, because—"

AUNT MARY, whispering: "No, no; I must take that, so that you can be with the baby below."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, how good you are, Aunt Mary! It's too bad; it is really. I can't let you."

AUNT MARY: "Well, then, you must; that's all. You know how that child tosses and kicks about in the night. You never can tell where his head's going to be in the morning, but you'll probably find it at the foot of the bed. I couldn't sleep an instant, my dear, if I thought that boy was in the upper berth; for I'd be sure of his tumbling out over you. Here, let me lay him down." She lays the baby in the lower berth. "There! Now get in, Agnes—do, and leave me to my struggle with the attraction of gravitation."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, *poor* aunty, how will you ever manage it? I *must* help you up."

AUNT MARY: "No, my dear; don't be foolish. But you may go and call the porter, if you like. I dare say he's used to it."

MRS. ROBERTS goes and speaks timidly to THE PORTER, who fails at first to understand, then smiles broadly, accepts a quarter with a duck of his head, and comes forward to AUNT MARY'S side: "Had he better give you his hand to rest your foot in, while you spring up as if you were mounting horse-back?"

AUNT MARY, with disdain: "*Spring!* My dear, I haven't *sprung* for a quarter of a century. I shall require every fibre in

the man's body. His hand, indeed! You get in first, Agnes."

MRS. ROBERTS: "I will, aunty dear; but—"

AUNT MARY, sternly: "Agnes, do as I say." MRS. ROBERTS crouches down on the lower berth. "I don't choose that any member of my family shall witness my contortions. Don't you look."

MRS. ROBERTS: "No, no, aunty."

AUNT MARY: "Now, porter, are you strong?"

PORTER: "I used to be porter at a Saratoga hotel, and carried up de ladies' trunks dere."

AUNT MARY: "Then you'll do, I think. Now, then, your knee; now your back. There! And very handsomely done; thanks."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Are you really in, Aunt Mary?"

AUNT MARY, dryly: "Yes. Good night."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Good night, aunty." After a pause of some minutes. "Aunty!"

AUNT MARY: "Well, what?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Do you think it's perfectly safe?" She rises in her berth, and looks up over the edge of the upper.

AUNT MARY: "I suppose so. It's a

well-managed road. They've got the air-brake, I've heard, and the Miller platform, and all those horrid things. What makes you introduce such unpleasant subjects?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, I don't mean accidents. But, you know, when you turn, it does creak so awfully. I shouldn't mind myself; but the baby—"

AUNT MARY: "Why, child, do you think I'm going to break through? I couldn't. I'm one of the *lightest* sleepers in the world."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Yes, I know you're a light sleeper; but—but it doesn't seem quite the same thing, somehow."

AUNT MARY: "But it is; it's quite the same thing, and you can be perfectly easy in your mind, my dear. I should be quite as loath to break through as you would to have me. Good night."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Yes; good night.—Aunty!"

AUNT MARY: "Well?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "You ought to just see him, how he's lying. He's a perfect log. *Couldn't* you just bend over, and peep down at him a moment?"

AUNT MARY: "Bend over! It would be the death of me. Good night."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Good night. Did you put the glass into my bag, or yours? I feel so very thirsty, and I want to go and get some water. I'm sure I don't know why I should be thirsty. Are you, Aunt Mary? Ah! here it is. Don't disturb yourself, aunty; I've found it. It was in my bag, just where I'd put it myself. But all this trouble about Willis has made me so fidgety that I don't know where anything is. And now I don't know how to manage about the baby while I go after the water. He's sleeping soundly enough now; but if he should happen to get into one of his rolling moods, he might tumble out on to the floor. Never mind, aunty, I've thought of something. I'll just barricade him with these bags and shawls. Now, old fellow, roll as much as you like. If you should happen to hear him stir, aunty, won't you—Aunty! Oh, dear! she's asleep already; and what shall I do?" While MRS. ROBERTS continues talking, various notes of protest, profane and otherwise, make themselves heard from different berths. "I know. I'll make a bold dash for the water, and be back in an instant, baby. Now, don't you move, you little rogue." She runs to the water-tank at the end of the car, and then back to her

berth. "Now, baby, here's mamma again. Are you all right, mamma's own?" A shaggy head and bearded face are thrust from the curtains of the next berth.

THE STRANGER: "Look here, ma'am. I don't want to be disagreeable about this thing, and I hope you won't take any offence; but the fact is, I'm half dead for want of sleep, and if you'll only keep quiet now a little while, I'll promise not to speak above my breath if ever I find you on a sleeping-car after you've come straight through from San Francisco, day and night, and not been able to get more than about a quarter of your usual allowance of rest—I will indeed."

MRS. ROBERTS: "I'm very sorry that I've disturbed you, and I'll try to be more quiet. I didn't suppose I was speaking so loud; but the cars keep up such a rattling that you never can tell how loud you *are* speaking. Did I understand you to say that you were from California?"

THE CALIFORNIAN: "Yes, ma'am."

MRS. ROBERTS: "San Francisco?"

THE CALIFORNIAN: "Yes, ma'am."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Thanks. It's a terribly long journey, isn't it? I know quite how to feel for you. I've a brother myself

coming on. In fact, we expected him before this." She scans his face as sharply as the lamplight will allow, and continues, after a brief hesitation. "It's always such a silly question to ask a person, and I suppose San Francisco is a large place, with a great many people coming and going, so that it would be only one chance in a thousand if you did."

THE CALIFORNIAN, patiently: "Did what, ma'am?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, I was just wondering if it was possible—but of course, it isn't, and it's very flat to ask—that you'd ever happened to meet my brother there. His name is Willis Campbell."

THE CALIFORNIAN, with more interest: "Campbell? Campbell? Yes, I know a man of that name. But I disremember his first name. Little low fellow—pretty chunky?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "I don't know. Do you mean short and stout?"

THE CALIFORNIAN: "Yes, ma'am."

MRS. ROBERTS: "I'm sure I can't tell. It's a great many years since he went out there, and I've never seen him in all that time. I thought if you *did* happen to know him— He's a lawyer."

THE CALIFORNIAN: "It's quite likely I know him; and in the morning, ma'am—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, excuse me. I'm very sorry to have kept you so long awake with my silly questions."

THE MAN IN THE UPPER BERTH: "Don't apologise, madam. I'm not a Californian myself, but I'm an orphan, and away from home, and I thank you, on behalf of all our fellow-passengers, for the mental refreshment that your conversation has afforded us. I could lie here, and listen to it all night; but there are invalids in some of these berths, and perhaps on their account it will be as well to defer everything till the morning, as our friend suggests. Allow me to wish you pleasant dreams, madam."

THE CALIFORNIAN, while MRS. ROBERTS shrinks back under the curtain of her berth in dismay, and stammers some inaudible excuse, slowly emerges full length from his berth: "Don't you mind me, ma'am; I've got everything but my boots and coat on. Now, then," standing beside the berth, and looking in upon the man in the upper tier. "You! Do you know that this is a lady you're talking to?"

THE UPPER BERTH: "By your voice and

your shaggy personal appearance I shouldn't have taken you for a lady—no, sir. But the light is very imperfect; you may be a bearded lady."

THE CALIFORNIAN: "You never mind about my looks. The question is, Do you want your head rapped up against the side of this car?"

THE UPPER BERTH: "With all the frankness of your own Pacific Slope, no."

MRS. ROBERTS, hastily reappearing: "Oh, no, no, don't hurt him! He's not to blame. I was wrong to keep on talking. Oh, please don't hurt him!"

THE CALIFORNIAN to THE UPPER BERTH: "You hear? Well, now, don't you speak another word to that lady to-night. Just go on, ma'am, and free your mind on any little matter you like. I don't want any sleep. How long has your brother been in California?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, don't let's talk about it now; I don't want to talk about it. I thought—I thought— Good night. Oh dear! I didn't suppose I was making so much trouble. I didn't mean to disturb anybody. I—" MRS. ROBERTS gives way to the excess of her confusion and mortification in a little sob, and then hides her grief

behind the curtains of her berth. THE CALIFORNIAN slowly emerges again from his couch, and stands beside it, looking in upon the man in the berth above.

THE CALIFORNIAN: "For half a cent I *would* rap your head up against that wall. Making the lady cry, and getting me so mad I can't sleep! Now see here, you just apologise. You beg that lady's pardon, or I'll have you out of there before you know yourself." Cries of "Good!" "That's right!" and "Make him show himself!" hail MRS. ROBERTS's champion, and heads, more or less dishevelled, are thrust from every berth. MRS. ROBERTS remains invisible and silent, and the loud and somewhat complicated respiration of her AUNT makes itself heard in the general hush of expectancy. A remark to the effect that "The old lady seems to enjoy her rest" achieves a facile applause. THE CALIFORNIAN again addresses the culprit: "Come, now, what do you say? I'll give you just one-half a minute."

MRS. ROBERTS from her shelter: "Oh, please, *please* don't make him say anything! It was very trying in me to keep him awake, and I know he didn't mean any offence. Oh, *do* let him be!"

THE CALIFORNIAN: "You hear that? You stay quiet the rest of the time; and if that lady chooses to keep us all awake the whole night, don't *you* say a word, or I'll settle with you in the morning." Loud and continued applause, amidst which THE CALIFORNIAN turns from the man in the berth before him, and restores order by marching along the aisle of the car in his stocking feet. The heads vanish behind the curtains. As the laughter subsides, he returns to his berth, and after a stare up and down the tranquillised car, he is about to retire.

A VOICE: "Oh, don't just bow! Speak!" A fresh burst of laughter greets this sally. THE CALIFORNIAN erects himself again with an air of bated wrath, and then suddenly breaks into a helpless laugh.

THE CALIFORNIAN: "Gentlemen, you're too many for *me*." He gets into his berth, and after cries of "Good for California!" "You're all right, William Nye!" and "You're several ahead yet!" the occupants of the different berths gradually relapse into silence, and at last, as the car lunges onward through the darkness, nothing is heard but the rhythmical clank of the machinery, with now and then a burst of audible slumber from MRS. ROBERTS'S AUNT MARY,

II

At Worcester, where the train has made the usual stop, THE PORTER, with his lantern on his arm, enters the car, preceding a gentleman somewhat anxiously smiling; his nervous speech contrasts painfully with the business-like impassiveness of THE PORTER, who refuses, with an air of incredulity, to enter into the confidences which the gentleman seems reluctant to bestow.

MR. EDWARD ROBERTS: "This is the Governor Marcy, isn't it?"

THE PORTER: "Yes, sah."

MR. ROBERTS: "Came on from Albany, and not from New York?"

THE PORTER: "Yes, sah, it did."

MR. ROBERTS: "Ah! it must be all right. I—"

THE PORTER: "Was your wife expecting you to come on board here?"

MR. ROBERTS: "Well, no, not exactly. She was expecting me to meet her at Boston. But I—" struggling to give the situation dignity, but failing, and throwing himself, with self-convicted silliness,

upon THE PORTER'S mercy. "The fact is, I thought I would surprise her by joining her here."

THE PORTER, refusing to have any mercy :
"Oh ! How did you expect to find her ?"

MR. ROBERTS : "Well—well—I don't know. I didn't consider." He looks down the aisle in despair at the close-drawn curtains of the berths, and up at the dangling hats and bags and bonnets, and down at the chaos of boots of both sexes on the floor. "I don't know *how* I expected to find her." MR. ROBERTS'S countenance falls, and he visibly sinks so low in his own esteem and an imaginary public opinion that THE PORTER begins to have a little compassion.

THE PORTER : "Dey's so many ladies on board *I* couldn't find her."

MR. ROBERTS : "Oh, no, no ! of course not. I didn't expect that."

THE PORTER : "Don't like to go routing 'em all up, you know. I wouldn't be allowed to."

MR. ROBERTS : "I don't ask it ; that would be preposterous."

THE PORTER : "What sort of looking lady was she ?"

MR. ROBERTS : "Well, I don't know, really. Nöt very tall, rather slight, blue

eyes. I—I don't know what you'd call her nose. And—stop! Oh yes, she had a child with her, a little boy. Yes!"

THE PORTER, thoughtfully looking down the aisle: "Dey was three ladies had children. I didn't notice whether dey was boys or girls, or *what* dey was. Didn't have anybody with her?"

MR. ROBERTS: "No, no. Only the child."

THE PORTER: "Well, I don't know what you are going to do, sah. It won't be a great while now till morning, you know. Here comes the conductor. Maybe he'll know what to do." MR. ROBERTS makes some futile, inarticulate attempts to prevent THE PORTER from laying the case before THE CONDUCTOR, and then stands guiltily smiling, overwhelmed with the hopeless absurdity of his position.

THE CONDUCTOR, entering the car and stopping before THE PORTER, and looking at MR. ROBERTS. "Gentleman want a berth?"

THE PORTER, grinning: "Well, no, sah. He's lookin' for his wife."

THE CONDUCTOR, with suspicion: "Is she aboard this car?"

MR. ROBERTS, striving to propitiate THE CONDUCTOR by a dastardly amiability:

"Oh yes, yes. There's no mistake about the car—the Governor Marcy. She telegraphed the name just before you left Albany, so that I could find her at Boston in the morning. Ah!"

THE CONDUCTOR: "At Boston?" Sternly: "Then what are you trying to find her at Worcester in the middle of the night for?"

MR. ROBERTS: "Why—I—that is—"

THE PORTER, taking compassion on MR. ROBERTS'S inability to continue: "Says he wanted to surprise her."

MR. ROBERTS: "Ha—yes, exactly. A little caprice, you know."

THE CONDUCTOR: "Well, that may all be so." MR. ROBERTS continues to smile in agonised helplessness against THE CONDUCTOR'S injurious tone, which becomes more and more offensively patronising. "But I can't do anything for you. Here are all these people asleep in their berths, and I can't go round waking them up because you want to surprise your wife."

MR. ROBERTS: "No, no; of course not. I never thought—"

THE CONDUCTOR: "My advice to *you* is to have a berth made up, and go to bed till we get to Boston, and surprise your wife by telling her what you tried to do."

MR. ROBERTS, unable to resent the patronage of this suggestion: "Well, I don't know but I will."

THE CONDUCTOR, going out: "The porter will make up a berth for you."

MR. ROBERTS to THE PORTER, who is about to pull down the upper berth over a vacant seat. "Ah! Er—I—I don't think I'll trouble you to make it up; it's so near morning now. Just bring me a pillow, and I'll try to get a nap without lying down." He takes the vacant seat.

THE PORTER: "All right, sah." He goes to the end of the car, and returns with a pillow.

MR. ROBERTS: "Ah—porter!"

THE PORTER: "Yes, sah."

MR. ROBERTS: "Of course you didn't notice; but you don't think you *did* notice who was in that berth yonder?"

He indicates a certain berth.

THE PORTER: "Dat's a gen'leman in dat berth, I think, sah."

MR. ROBERTS, astutely: "There's a bonnet hanging from the hook at the top. I'm not sure, but it looks like my wife's bonnet."

THE PORTER, evidently shaken by this reasoning, but recovering his firmness:

"Yes, sah. But you can't depend upon de ladies to hang deir bonnets on de right hook. Jes' likely as not dat lady's took de hook at de foot of her berth instead o' de head. Sometimes dey takes both."

MR. ROBERTS: "Ah!" After a pause.
"Porter!"

THE PORTER: "Yes, sah."

MR. ROBERTS: "You wouldn't feel justified in looking?"

THE PORTER: "I couldn't sah; I couldn't, indeed."

MR. ROBERTS, reaching his left hand towards THE PORTER's, and pressing a half-dollar into his instantly responsive palm: "But there's nothing to prevent *my* looking if I feel perfectly sure of the bonnet?"

THE PORTER: "N-no, sah."

MR. ROBERTS: "All right."

THE PORTER retires to the end of the car, and resumes the work of polishing the passengers' boots. After an interval of quiet, MR. ROBERTS rises, and, looking about him with what he feels to be melodramatic stealth, approaches the suspected berth. He unloops the curtain with a trembling hand, and peers ineffectually in; he advances his head farther and farther into the darkened recess, and then suddenly

dodges back with THE CALIFORNIAN hanging to his neck-cloth with one hand.

THE CALIFORNIAN, savagely: "What do you want?"

MR. ROBERTS, struggling and breathless: "I—I—I want my wife."

THE CALIFORNIAN: "Want your wife! Have *I* got your wife?"

MR. ROBERTS: "No—ah—that is—ah, excuse me—I thought you *were* my wife."

THE CALIFORNIAN, getting out of the berth, but at the same time keeping hold of MR. ROBERTS: "Thought I was your *wife*! Do I look like your wife? You can't play that on me, old man. Porter! conductor!"

MR. ROBERTS, agonised: "Oh, I beseech you, my dear sir, don't—don't! I can explain it—I can indeed. I know it has an ugly look; but if you will allow me two words—only two words—"

MRS. ROBERTS, suddenly parting the curtain of her berth, and springing out into the aisle, with her hair wildly dishevelled: "Edward!"

MR. ROBERTS: "Oh, Agnes, explain to this gentleman!" Imploringly: "Don't you know me?"

A VOICE: "Make him show you the strawberry mark on his left arm."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Edward! Edward!"
THE CALIFORNIAN mechanically loses his grip, and they fly into each other's embrace.
"Where did you come from?"

A VOICE: "Centre door, left hand, one back."

THE CONDUCTOR, returning with his lantern: "Hallo! What's the matter here?"

A VOICE: "Train robbers! Throw up your hands! Tell the express-messenger to bring his safe." The passengers emerge from their berths in various *déshabillé* and bewilderment.

THE CONDUCTOR to MR. ROBERTS: "Have *you* been making all this row, waking up my passengers."

THE CALIFORNIAN: "No, sir, he hasn't. *I've* been making this row. This gentleman was peaceably looking for his wife, and I misunderstood him. You want to say anything to *me*?"

THE CONDUCTOR, silently taking THE CALIFORNIAN'S measure with his eye, as he stands six feet in his stockings: "If I did I'd get the biggest brakeman I could find to do it for me. *I've* got nothing to say except that I think you'd better all go back to bed again." He goes out, and the

passengers disappear one by one, leaving the ROBERTSES and THE CALIFORNIAN alone.

THE CALIFORNIAN, to MR. ROBERTS :
“Stranger, I’m sorry I got you into this scrape.”

MR. ROBERTS : “Oh, don’t speak of it, my dear sir. I’m sure we owe you all sorts of apologies, which I shall be most happy to offer you at my house in Boston, with every needful explanation.” He takes out his card, and gives it to THE CALIFORNIAN, who looks at it, and then looks at MR. ROBERTS curiously. “There’s my address, and I’m sure we shall both be glad to have you call.”

MRS. ROBERTS : “Oh yes, indeed.” THE CALIFORNIAN parts the curtains of his berth to re-enter it. “Good night, sir, and I assure you *we* shall do nothing more to disturb you—shall we, Edward?”

MR. ROBERTS : “No. And now, dear, I think you’d better go back to your berth.”

MRS. ROBERTS : “I couldn’t sleep, and I shall not go back. Is this your place? I will just rest my head on your shoulder; and we must both be perfectly quiet. You’ve no idea what a nuisance I have been making of myself. The whole car was perfectly furious at me one time, I kept talking so loud. I don’t know how I came to do it, but I suppose it

was thinking about you and Willis meeting without knowing each other made me nervous, and I couldn't be still. I woke everybody up with my talking, and some of them were quite outrageous in their remarks; but I didn't blame them the least bit, for I should have been just as bad. That Californian gentleman was perfectly splendid, though. I can tell you *he* made them stop. We struck up quite a friendship. I told him I had a brother coming on from California, and he's going to try to think whether he knows Willis." Groans and inarticulate protests make themselves heard from different berths. "I declare, I've got to talking again! There, now, I *shall* stop, and they won't hear another squeak from me the rest of the night." She lifts her head from her husband's shoulder. "I wonder if baby will roll out. He *does* kick so! And I just sprang up and left him when I heard your voice, without putting anything to keep him in. I *must* go and have a look at him, or I never can settle down. No, no, don't you go, Edward; you'll be prying into all the wrong berths in the car, you poor thing! You stay here, and I'll be back in half a second. I wonder which is my berth. Ah! that's it; I know

the one now." She makes a sudden dash at a berth, and pulling open the curtains is confronted by the bearded visage of THE CALIFORNIAN. "Ah! Ow! ow! Edward! Ah! I—I beg your pardon, sir; excuse me; I didn't know it was you. I came for my baby."

THE CALIFORNIAN, solemnly: "I haven't got any baby, ma'am."

MRS. ROBERTS: "No—no—I thought *you* were my baby."

THE CALIFORNIAN: "Perhaps I am, ma'am; I've lost so much sleep I could cry, anyway. Do I *look* like your baby?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "No, no, you don't." In distress that overcomes her mortification. "Oh, where *is* my baby? I left him all uncovered, and he'll take his death of cold, even if he doesn't roll out. Oh, Edward, Edward, help me to find baby!"

MR. ROBERTS, bustling aimlessly about: "Yes, yes; certainly, my dear. But don't be alarmed; we shall find him."

THE CALIFORNIAN, getting out in his stocking-feet: "We shall find him, ma'am, if we have to search every berth in this car. Don't you take on. That baby's going to be found if he's aboard the train, now, you bet!" He looks about and then tears open

the curtains of a berth at random. "That's your baby, ma'am?"

MRS. ROBERTS, flying upon the infant thus exposed: "Oh, *baby*, baby, baby! I thought I had lost you. Um! um! um!" She clasps him in her arms, and covers his face and neck with kisses.

THE CALIFORNIAN, as he gets back into his berth, *sotto voce*: "I wish I *had* been her baby."

MRS. ROBERTS, returning with her husband to his seat, and bringing the baby with her: "There! Did you ever *see* such a sleeper, Edward?" In her ecstasy she abandons all control of her voice, and joyfully exclaims: "He has slept all through this excitement, without a wink."

A solemn VOICE from one of the berths: "I envy him." A laugh follows, in which all the passengers join.

MRS. ROBERTS, in a hoarse whisper, breaking a little with laughter: "Oh, my goodness! there I went again. But how funny! I assure you, Edward, that if their remarks had not been about me, I could have really quite enjoyed some of them. I wish there had been somebody here to take them down. And I hope I shall see some of the speakers in the

morning before— Edward, I've got an idea !”

MR. ROBERTS, endeavouring to teach his wife by example to lower her voice, which has risen again : “ What—what is it, my dear ? ”

MRS. ROBERTS : “ Why, don't you see ? How perfectly ridiculous it was of me not to think of it before ! though I did think of it once, and hadn't the courage to insist upon it. But of course it is ; and it accounts for his being so polite and kind to me through all, and it's the only thing that can. Yes, yes, it *must* be.”

MR. ROBERTS, mystified : “ What ? ”

MRS. ROBERTS : “ Willis.”

MR. ROBERTS : “ Who ? ”

MRS. ROBERTS : “ This Californian.”

MR. ROBERTS : “ Oh ! ”

MRS. ROBERTS : “ No *stranger* could have been so patient, and—and—attentive ; and I know that he recognised me from the first, and he's just kept it up for a joke, so as to surprise us, and have a good laugh at us when we get to Boston. Of course it's Willis.”

MR. ROBERTS, doubtfully : “ Do you think so, my dear ? ”

MRS. ROBERTS : “ I *know* it. Didn't you

notice how he looked at your card? And I want you to go at once and speak to him, and turn the tables on him."

MR. ROBERTS: "I—I'd rather *not*, my dear."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Why, Edward, what can you mean?"

MR. ROBERTS: "He's very violent. Suppose it *shouldn't* be Willis?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Nonsense! It *is* Willis. Come, let's both go and just tax him with it. He can't deny it, after all he's done for me." She pulls her reluctant husband toward THE CALIFORNIAN'S berth, and they each draw a curtain. "Willis!"

THE CALIFORNIAN, with plaintive endurance: "Well, ma'am?"

MRS. ROBERTS, triumphantly: "There! I knew it was you all along. How could you play such a joke on me?"

THE CALIFORNIAN: "I didn't know there'd been any joke; but I suppose there must have been, if you say so. Who am I now, ma'am—your husband, or your baby, or your husband's wife, or—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "How funny you are! You *know* you're Willis Campbell, my only brother. Now *don't* try to keep it up any longer, Willis."

VOICES, from various berths : "Give us a rest, Willis?" "Joke's too thin, Willis!" "You're played out, Willis!" "Own up, old fellow—own up!"

THE CALIFORNIAN, issuing from his berth, and walking up and down the aisle, as before, till quiet is restored : "I haven't got any sister, and my name ain't Willis, and it ain't Campbell. I'm very sorry, because I'd like to oblige you any way I could."

MRS. ROBERTS, in deep mortification : "It's I who ought to apologise, and I do most humbly. I don't know what to say; but when I got to thinking about it, and how kind you had been to me, and how sweet you had been under all my—interruptions, I felt perfectly sure that you couldn't be a mere stranger, and then the idea struck me that you must be my brother in disguise; and I was so certain of it that I couldn't help just letting you know that we'd found you out, and—"

MR. ROBERTS, offering a belated and feeble moral support : "Yes."

MRS. ROBERTS, promptly turning upon him : "And *you* ought to have kept me from making such a simpleton of myself, Edward."

THE CALIFORNIAN, soothingly : “ Well, ma’am, that ain’t always so easy. A man may mean well, and yet not be able to carry out his intentions. But it’s all right. And I reckon we’d better try to quiet down again, and get what rest we can.”

MRS. ROBERTS : “ Why, yes, certainly ; and I will try—oh, I will *try* not to disturb you again. And if there’s anything we can do in reparation after we reach Boston, we shall be so glad to do it ! ”

They bow themselves away, and return to their seat, while THE CALIFORNIAN re-enters his berth.

III

THE train stops at Framingham, and THE PORTER comes in with a passenger, whom he shows to the seat opposite MR. and MRS. ROBERTS.

THE PORTER : “ You can sit here, sah. We’ll be in, in about half an hour now. Hang up your bag for you, sah ? ”

THE PASSENGER : “ No, leave it on the seat here.”

THE PORTER goes out, and the ROBERTSES maintain a dejected silence. The bottom of the bag, thrown carelessly on the seat, is toward the ROBERTSES, who regard it listlessly.

MRS. ROBERTS, suddenly clutching her husband's arm, and hissing in his ear: "See!" She points to the white lettering on the bag, where the name "Willis Campbell, San Francisco," is distinctly legible. "But it can't be; it must be some other Campbell. I can't risk it."

MR. ROBERTS: "But there's the name. It would be very strange if there were two people from San Francisco of exactly the same name. I will speak."

MRS. ROBERTS, as wildly as one can in whisper: "No, no, I can't let you. We've made ourselves the laughing-stock of the whole car already with our mistakes, and I can't go on. I would rather perish than ask him. You don't suppose it *could* be? No, it couldn't. There may be twenty Willis Campbells in San Francisco, and there probably are. Do you think he looks like me? He has a straight nose; but you can't tell anything about the lower part of his face, the beard covers it so; and I can't make out the colour of his eyes by this

light. But, of course, it's all nonsense. Still, if it *should* be! It would be very stupid of us to ride all the way from Framingham to Boston with that name staring one in the eyes. I *wish* he would turn it away. If it really turned out to be Willis, he would think we were awfully stiff and cold. But I can't help it; I *can't* go attacking every stranger I see, and accusing him of being my brother. No, no, I can't, and I *won't*, and that's all about it." She leans forward, and addresses the stranger with sudden sweetness. "Excuse me, sir, but I *am* very much interested by the name on your bag. Not that I think you are even acquainted with him, and there are probably a great many of them there; but your coming from the same city, and all, *does* seem a little queer, and I hope you won't think me intrusive in speaking to you, because if you *should* happen, by the thousandth of a chance, to be the right one, I should be so happy!"

CAMPBELL: "The right what, madam?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "The right Willis Campbell."

CAMPBELL: "I hope I'm not the wrong one; though after a week's pull on the railroad it's pretty hard for a man to tell which

Willis Campbell he is. May I ask if your Willis Campbell has friends in Boston?"

MRS. ROBERTS, eagerly: "He had a sister and a brother-in-law and a nephew."

CAMPBELL: "Name of Roberts?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Every one."

CAMPBELL: "Then you're—"

MRS. ROBERTS, ecstatically: "Agnes."

CAMPBELL: "And he's—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Mr. Roberts!"

CAMPBELL: "And the baby's—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Asleep!"

CAMPBELL: "Then I *am* the right one."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, Willis! Willis! Willis! To think of our meeting in this way!" She kisses and embraces him, while MR. ROBERTS shakes one of his hands which he finds disengaged. "*How* in the world did it happen?"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, I found myself a little ahead of time, and I stopped off with an old friend of mine at Framingham; I didn't want to disappoint you when you came to meet this train, or get you up last night at midnight."

MRS. ROBERTS: "And I was in Albany, and I've been moving heaven and earth to get home before you arrived; and Edward came aboard at Worcester to surprise me,

and— Oh, you've never seen the baby! I'll run right and get him this instant, just as he is, and bring him. Edward, you be explaining to Willis— Oh, my goodness!" looking wildly about. "I don't remember the berth, and I shall be sure to wake up that poor California gentleman again. *What shall I do?*"

CAMPBELL: "What California gentleman?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, somebody we've been stirring up the whole blessed night. First I took him for baby, and then Edward took him for me, and then I took him for baby again, and then we both took him for you."

CAMPBELL: "Did he look like any of us?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Like *us*? He's eight feet tall, if he's an inch, in his stockings—and he's always in them—and he has a long black beard and moustaches, and he's very lanky, and stoops over a good deal; but he's just as lovely as he can be, and live, and he's been as kind and patient as twenty Jobs."

CAMPBELL: "Speaks in a sort of soft, slow grind?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Yes."

CAMPBELL : "Gentle and deferential to ladies?"

MRS. ROBERTS : "As pie."

CAMPBELL : "It's Tom Goodall. I'll have him out of there in half a second. I want you to take him home with you, Agnes. He's the best fellow in the world. *Which* is his berth?"

MRS. ROBERTS : "Don't ask me, Willis. But if you'd go for baby, you'll be sure to find *him*."

MR. ROBERTS, timidly indicating a berth : "I think that's the one."

CAMPBELL, plunging at it, and pulling the curtains open : "You, old Tom Goodall !"

THE CALIFORNIAN, appearing : "I ain't any Tom Goodall. My name's Abram Sawyer."

CAMPBELL, falling back : "Well, sir, you're right. I'm awfully sorry to disturb you ; but, from my sister's description here, I felt certain you must be my old friend Tom Goodall."

THE CALIFORNIAN : "I ain't surprised at it. I'm only surprised I *ain't* Tom Goodall. I've been a baby twice, and I've been a man's wife once, and once I've been a long-lost brother."

CAMPBELL, laughing : "Oh, they've found *him*. *I'm* the long-lost brother."

THE CALIFORNIAN, sleepily: "Has she found the other one?"

CAMPBELL: "Yes; all right, I believe."

THE CALIFORNIAN: "Has *he* found what *he* wanted?"

CAMPBELL: "Yes; we're all together here." THE CALIFORNIAN makes a movement to get into bed again. "Oh, don't! You'd better make a night of it now. It's almost morning anyway. We want you to go home with us, and Mrs. Roberts will give you a bed at her house, and let you sleep a week."

THE CALIFORNIAN: "Well, I reckon you're right, stranger. I seem to be in the hands of Providence to-night, anyhow." He pulls on his boots and coat, and takes his seat beside CAMPBELL. "I reckon there ain't any use in fighting against Providence."

MRS. ROBERTS, briskly, as if she had often tried it and failed: "Oh, not the least in the world. I'm sure it was all intended and if you had turned out to be Willis at last, I should be *certain* of it. What surprises me is that you shouldn't turn out to be anybody, after all."

THE CALIFORNIAN: "Yes it is kind of curious. But I couldn't help it. I did my best."

MRS. ROBERTS : " Oh, don't speak of it. We are the ones who ought to apologise. But if you only had been somebody, it would have been such a good joke ! We could always have had such a laugh over it, don't you see ? "

THE CALIFORNIAN : " Yes, ma'am, it would have been funny. But I hope you 've enjoyed it as it is. "

MRS. ROBERTS : " Oh, very much, thanks to you. Only I can't seem to get reconciled to your not being anybody, after all. You *must* at least be some one we've heard about, don't you think ? It's so strange that you and Willis never even met. Don't you think you have some acquaintances in common ? "

CAMPBELL : " Look here, Agnes, do you always shout at the top of your voice in this way when you converse in a sleeping-car ? "

MRS. ROBERTS : " Was I talking loud again ? Well, you can't help it, if you want to make people hear you. "

CAMPBELL : " But there must be a lot of them who don't want to hear you. I wonder that the passengers who are not blood-relations don't throw things at you—boots and hand-bags and language. "

MRS. ROBERTS: "Why, that's what they've *been* doing—language at least—and I'm only surprised they're not doing it now."

THE CALIFORNIAN, rising: "They'd better not, ma'am." He patrols the car from end to end, and quells some rising murmurs, halting at the rebellious berths as he passes.

MRS. ROBERTS, enraptured by his championship: "Oh, he *must* be some connection." She glances through the window. "I do believe that was Newton, or Newtonville, or West Newton, or Newton Centre. I must run and wake up baby, and get him dressed. I shan't want to wait an instant after we get in. Why, we're slowing up! Why, I do believe we're there! Edward, we're there! Only fancy being there already!"

MR. ROBERTS: "Yes, my dear. Only we're not quite there yet. Hadn't we better call your Aunt Mary?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "I'd forgotten her."

CAMPBELL: "Is Aunt Mary with you?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "To be sure she is. Didn't I tell you She came on expressly to meet you."

CAMPBELL, starting up impetuously, "Which berth is she in?"

MRS. ROBERTS : " Right over baby."

CAMPBELL : " And which berth is baby in ?"

MRS. ROBERTS, distractedly : " Why, that's just what I can't *tell*. It was bad enough when they were all filled up ; but now, since the people have begun to come out of them, and some of them are made into seats, I *can't* tell."

THE CALIFORNIAN : " I'll look for you, ma'am. I should like to wake up all the wrong passengers on this car. I'd take a pleasure in it. If you could make sure of any berth that *ain't* the one, I'd begin on that."

MRS. ROBERTS : " I can't even be sure of the wrong one. No, no ; you mustn't—" THE CALIFORNIAN moves away, and pauses in front of one of the berths, looking back inquiringly at MRS. ROBERTS. " Oh, don't ask *me* ! I can't tell." To CAMPBELL : " Isn't he amusing ? So like all those Californians that one reads of—so chivalrous and so humorous !"

AUNT MARY, thrusting her head from the curtains of the berth before which THE CALIFORNIAN is standing : " Go along with you ! What do you want ?"

THE CALIFORNIAN : " Aunt Mary."

AUNT MARY : "Go away. Aunt Mary, indeed !"

MRS. ROBERTS, turning toward her, followed by CAMPBELL and MR. ROBERTS : "Why, Aunt Mary, it *is* you ! And here's Willis, and here's Edward."

AUNT MARY : "Nonsense ! How did they get aboard ?"

MRS. ROBERTS : "Edward came on at Worcester, and Willis at Framingham, to surprise me."

AUNT MARY : "And a very silly performance. Let them wait till I'm dressed, and then I'll talk to them. Send for the porter." She withdraws her head behind the curtain, and then thrusts it out again. "And who, pray, may *this* be ?" She indicates THE CALIFORNIAN.

MRS. ROBERTS : "Oh, a friend of ours from California, who's been so kind to us all night, and who's going home with us."

AUNT MARY : "Another ridiculous surprise, I suppose. But he shall not surprise *me*. Young man, isn't your name Sawyer ?"

THE CALIFORNIAN : "Yes, ma'am."

AUNT MARY : "Abram ?"

THE CALIFORNIAN : "Abram Sawyer. You're right there, ma'am."

MRS. ROBERTS : "Oh ! oh ! I knew it !

I knew that he must be somebody belonging to us. Oh, thank you, aunty, for thinking—”

AUNT MARY: “Don’t be absurd, Agnes. Then you’re my—”

A VOICE from one of the berths: “Long-lost stepson. Found! found at last!”

THE CALIFORNIAN looks vainly round in an endeavour to identify the speaker, and then turns again to AUNT MARY.

AUNT MARY: “Weren’t your parents from Bath?”

THE CALIFORNIAN, eagerly: “Both of ’em, ma’am—both of ’em.”

THE VOICE: “O my prophetic soul, my uncle!”

AUNT MARY: “Then you’re my old friend Kate Harris’s daughter?”

THE CALIFORNIAN: “I might be her *son*, ma’am; but *my* mother’s name was Susan Wakeman.”

AUNT MARY, in sharp disgust: “Call the porter, please.” She withdraws her head and pulls her curtains together; the rest look blankly at one another.

CAMPBELL: “Another failure, and just when we thought we were sure of you. I don’t know what we shall do about you, Mr. Sawyer.”

THE VOICE : " Adopt him."

CAMPBELL : " That's a good idea. We will adopt you. You shall be our adoptive—"

THE VOICE : " Baby boy."

ANOTHER VOICE : " Wife."

A THIRD VOICE : " Brother."

A FOURTH VOICE : " Early friend."

A FIFTH VOICE : " Kate Harris's daughter."

CAMPBELL, laying his hand on THE CALIFORNIAN'S shoulder, and breaking into a laugh : " Don't mind them. They don't mean anything. It's just their way. You come home with my sister, and spend Christmas, and let us devote the rest of our lives to making your declining years happy."

VOICES : " Good for you, Willis !"
" We'll all come !" " No ceremony !"
" Small and early !"

CAMPBELL, looking round : " We appear to have fallen in with a party of dry-goods drummers. It makes a gentleman feel like an intruder." The train stops ; he looks out of the window. " We've arrived. Come, Agnes ; come, Roberts ; come, Mr. Sawyer—let's be going." They gather up their several wraps and bags, and move with great dignity toward the door.

AUNT MARY, putting out her head :
“ Agnes ! If you must forget your aunt,
at least remember your child.”

MRS. ROBERTS, running back in an agony
of remorse : “ Oh, *baby*, did I forget you ? ”

CAMPBELL : “ Oh, *aunty*, did she forget
you ? ” He runs back, and extends his
arms to his aunt. “ Let me help you down,
Aunt Mary.”

AUNT MARY : “ Nonsense, Willis. Send
the porter.”

CAMPBELL, turning round and confronting
THE PORTER : “ He was here upon instinct.
Shall he fetch a step-ladder ? ”

AUNT MARY : “ He will know what to
do. Go away, Willis ; go away with that
child, Agnes. If I should happen to fall
on you—” They retreat ; the curtain drops
and her voice is heard behind it addressing
THE PORTER : “ Give me your hand ; now
your back ; now your knee. So ! And
very well done, thanks.”

THE REGISTER

I

SCENE : In an upper chamber of a boarding-house in Melanchthon Place, Boston, a mature, plain young lady, with every appearance of establishing herself in the room for the first time, moves about, bestowing little touches of decoration here and there, and talking with another young lady, whose voice comes through the open doorway of an inner room.

MISS ETHEL REED, from within : "What in the world are you doing, Nettie?"

MISS HENRIETTA SPAULDING : "Oh, sticking up a household god or two. What are you doing?"

MISS REED : "Despairing."

MISS SPAULDING : "Still?"

MISS REED, tragically : "*Still* ! How soon did you expect me to stop ? I am here on the sofa, where I flung myself two hours ago, and I don't think I shall ever get up. There is no reason *why* I ever should."

MISS SPAULDING, suggestively : "Dinner."

MISS REED : "Oh, dinner ! Dinner, to a broken heart !"

MISS SPAULDING : "I don't believe your heart is broken."

MISS REED : "But I tell you it is ! I ought to know when my own heart is broken, I should hope. What makes you think it isn't."

MISS SPAULDING : "Oh, it's happened so often !"

MISS REED : "But this is a real case. You ought to feel my forehead. It's as *hot* !"

MISS SPAULDING : "You ought to get up and help me put this room to rights, and then you would feel better."

MISS REED : "No ; I should feel worse. The idea of household gods makes me sick. Sylvan deities are what *I* want ; the great god Pan among the cat-tails and arrow-heads in the 'ma'sh' at Ponkwasset ; the dryads of the birch woods—there are no oaks ; the nymphs that haunt the heights

and hollows of the dear old mountain ;
the—”

MISS SPAULDING : “ Wha-a-at ? I can’t
hear a word you say.”

MISS REED : “ That’s because you keep
fussing about so. Why don’t you be quiet,
if you want to hear ? ” She lifts her voice
to its highest pitch, with a pause for dis-
tinctness between the words : “ I’m heart-
broken for—Ponkwasset. The dryads—of
the—birch woods. The nymphs—and the
great—god—Pan—in the reeds—by the
river. And all—that—sort of—thing ! ”

MISS SPAULDING : “ You know very well
you’re not.”

MISS REED : “ I’m not ? What’s the
reason I’m not ? Then, what am I heart-
broken for ? ”

MISS SPAULDING : “ You’re not heart-
broken at all. You know very well that
he’ll call before we’ve been here twenty-
four hours.”

MISS REED : “ Who ? ”

MISS SPAULDING : “ The great god Pan.”

MISS REED : “ Oh, how cruel you are, to
mock me so ! Come in here, and sympathise
a little ! Do, Nettie.”

MISS SPAULDING : “ No ; you come out
here and utilise a little. I’m acting for

your best good, as they say at Ponk-wasset."

MISS REED: "When they want to be disagreeable!"

MISS SPAULDING: "If this room isn't in order by the time he calls, you'll be everlastingly disgraced."

MISS REED: "I'm that now. I can't be more so—there's that comfort. What makes you think he'll call?"

MISS SPAULDING: "Because he's a gentleman, and will want to apologise. He behaved very rudely to you."

MISS REED: "No, Nettie; *I* behaved rudely to *him*. Yes! Besides, if he behaved rudely, he was no gentleman. It's a contradiction in terms, don't you see? But I'll tell you what I'm going to do if he comes. I'm going to show a proper spirit for once in my life. I'm going to refuse to see him. *You've* got to see him."

MISS SPAULDING: "Nonsense."

MISS REED: "Why nonsense? Oh, why? Expound!"

MISS SPAULDING: "Because he wasn't rude to me, and he doesn't want to see me. Because I'm plain, and you're pretty."

MISS REED: "I'm *not*! You know it perfectly well. I'm hideous."

MISS SPAULDING: "Because I'm poor, and you're a person of independent property."

MISS REED: "*Dependent* property, I should call it: just enough to be useless on! But that's insulting to *him*. How can you say it's because I have a little money?"

MISS SPAULDING: "Well, then, I won't. I take it back. I'll say it's because you're young, and I'm old."

MISS REED: "You're *not* old. You're as young as anybody, Nettie Spaulding. And you know I'm not young; I'm twenty-seven, if I'm a day. I'm just dropping into the grave. But I can't argue with you, miles off so, any longer." MISS REED appears at the open door dragging languidly after her the shawl which she had evidently drawn round her on the sofa; her fair hair is a little disordered, and she presses it into shape with one hand as she comes forward; a lovely flush vies with a heavenly pallor in her cheeks; she looks a little pensive in the arching eyebrows, and a little humorous about the dimpled mouth. "Now I can prove that you are entirely wrong. Where were you?—This room *is* rather an improvement over the one we had last

winter. There is more of a view"—she goes to the window—"of the houses across the Place; and I always think the swell front gives a pretty shape to a room. I'm sorry they've stopped building them. Your piano goes very nicely into that little alcove. Yes, we're quite palatial. And, on the whole, I'm glad there's no fireplace. It's a pleasure at times; but for the most part it's a vanity and a vexation, getting dust and ashes over everything. Yes; after all, give me the good old-fashioned, clean, convenient register! Ugh! My feet are like ice." She pulls an easy-chair up to the register in the corner of the room, and pushes open its valves with the toe of her slipper. As she settles herself luxuriously in the chair, and poises her feet daintily over the register: "Ah, this is something like! Henrietta Spaulding, ma'am! Did I ever tell you that you were the best friend I have in the world?"

MISS SPAULDING, who continues her work of arranging the room: "Often."

MISS REED: "Did you ever believe it?"

MISS SPAULDING: "Never."

MISS REED: "Why?"

MISS SPAULDING, thoughtfully regarding a vase which she holds in her hand, after

several times shifting it from a bracket to the corner of her piano and back : " I wish I could tell where you *do* look best ! "

MISS REED, leaning forward wistfully, with her hands clasped and resting on her knees : " I wish you would tell me *why* you don't believe you're the best friend I have in the world. "

MISS SPAULDING, finally placing the vase on the bracket : " Because you've said so too often. "

MISS REED : " Oh, that's no reason ! I can prove to you that you are. Who else but you would have taken in a homeless and friendless creature like me, and let her stay bothering round in demoralising idleness, while you were seriously teaching the young idea how to drub the piano ? "

MISS SPAULDING : " Anybody who wanted a room-mate as much as I did, and could have found one willing to pay more than her share of the lodging. "

MISS REED, thoughtfully : " Do you think so, Henrietta ? "

MISS SPAULDING : " I know so. "

MISS REED : " And you're not afraid that you wrong yourself ? "

MISS SPAULDING : " Not the least. "

MISS REED : " Well, be it so—as they

say in novels. I will not contradict you ; I will not say you are my *best* friend ; I will merely say that you are my *only* friend. Come here, Henrietta. Draw up your chair, and put your little hand in mine."

MISS SPAULDING, with severe distrust : "What do you want, Ethel Reed?"

MISS REED : "I want—I want—to talk it over with you."

MISS SPAULDING, recoiling : "I knew it ! Well, now, we've talked it over enough ; we've talked it over till there's nothing left of it."

MISS REED : "Oh, there's everything left ! It remains in all its original enormity. Perhaps we shall get some new light upon it." She extends a pleading hand towards MISS SPAULDING. "Come, Henrietta, my only friend, shake !—as the 'good Indians' say. Let your Ethel pour her hackneyed sorrows into your bosom. Such an uncomfortable image, it always seems, doesn't it, pouring sorrows into bosoms ! Come !"

MISS SPAULDING, decidedly : "No, I won't ! And you needn't try wheedling any longer. I won't sympathise with you on that basis at all."

MISS REED : "What shall I try, then, if you won't let me try wheedling?"

MISS SPAULDING, going to the piano and opening it: "Try courage; try self-respect."

MISS REED: "Oh, dear! when I haven't a morsel of either. Are you going to practise, you cruel maid?"

MISS SPAULDING: "Of course I am. It's half-past four, and if I don't do it now I shan't be prepared to-morrow for Miss Robins: she takes this piece."

MISS REED: "Well, well, perhaps it's all for the best. If music be the food of—umph-ump!—you know what!—play on." They both laugh, and MISS SPAULDING pushes back a little from the piano, and wheels toward her friend, letting one hand rest slightly on the keys.

MISS SPAULDING: "Ethel Reed, you're the most ridiculous girl in the world."

MISS REED: "Correct!"

MISS SPAULDING: "And I don't believe you ever were in love, or ever will be."

MISS REED: "Ah, there you wrong me, Henrietta! I have been, and I shall be—lots of times."

MISS SPAULDING: "Well, what do you want to say now? You must hurry, for I can't lose any more time."

MISS REED: "I will free my mind with

neatness and despatch. I simply wish to go over the whole affair, from Alfred to Omaha; and you've got to let me talk as much slang and nonsense as I want. And then I'll skip all the details I can. Will you?"

MISS SPAULDING, with impatient patience: "Oh, I suppose so!"

MISS REED: "That's very sweet of you, though you don't look it. Now, where was I? Oh yes; do you think it was forth-putting at all, to ask him if he would give me the lessons?"

MISS SPAULDING: "It depends upon why you asked him."

MISS REED: "I asked him from—from—Let me see; I asked him because—from—Yes, I say it boldly; I asked him from an enthusiasm for art, and a sincere wish to learn the use of oil, as he called it. Yes!"

MISS SPAULDING: "Are you sure?"

MISS REED: "Sure? Well, we will say that I am, for the sake of argument. And, having secured this basis, the question is whether I wasn't bound to offer him pay at the end, and whether he wasn't wrong to take my doing so in dudgeon."

MISS SPAULDING: "Yes, I think he was wrong. And the terms of his refusal were

very ungentlemanly. He ought to apologise most amply and humbly." At a certain expression in MISS REED'S face, she adds, with severity: "Unless you're keeping back the main point. You usually do. Are you?"

MISS REED: "No, no. I've told you everything—everything!"

MISS SPAULDING: "Then I say, as I said from the beginning, that he behaved very badly. It was very awkward and very painful, but you've really nothing to blame yourself for."

MISS REED, ruefully: "No-o-o!"

MISS SPAULDING: "What do you mean by that sort of 'No'?"

MISS REED: "Nothing."

MISS SPAULDING, sternly: "Yes, you do, Ethel."

MISS REED: "I don't, really. What makes you think I do?"

MISS SPAULDING: "It sounded very dishonest."

MISS REED: "Did it? I didn't mean it to." Her friend breaks down with a laugh, while MISS REED preserves a demure countenance.

MISS SPAULDING: "What *are* you keeping back?"

MISS REED : " Nothing at all—less than nothing ! I never thought it was worth mentioning."

MISS SPAULDING : " Are you telling me the truth ?"

MISS REED : " I'm telling you the truth and something more. You can't ask better than that, can you ?"

MISS SPAULDING, turning to her music again : " Certainly not."

MISS REED, in a pathetic wail : " O Henrietta ! do you abandon me thus ? Well, I will tell you, heartless girl ! I've only kept it back till now because it was so extremely mortifying to my pride as an artist—as a student of oil. Will you hear me ?"

* MISS SPAULDING, beginning to play : " No."

MISS REED, with burlesque wildness : " You shall !" MISS SPAULDING involuntarily desists. " There was a moment—a fatal moment—when he said he thought he ought to tell me that if I found oil amusing I could go on ; but that he didn't believe I should ever learn to use it, and he couldn't let me take lessons from him with the expectation that I should. There !"

MISS SPAULDING, with awful reproach :

“And you call that less than nothing? I’ve almost a mind never to speak to you again, Ethel. How *could* you deceive me so?”

MISS REED: “Was it really deceiving? I shouldn’t call it so. And I needed your sympathy so much, and I knew I shouldn’t get it unless you thought I was altogether in the right.”

MISS SPAULDING: “You are altogether in the *wrong*! And it’s *you* that ought to apologise to *him*—on your bended knees. How *could* you offer him money after that? I wonder at you, Ethel!”

MISS REED: “Why — don’t you see, Nettie?—I did keep on taking the lessons of him. I did find oil amusing—or the oilist—and I kept on. Of course I had to, off there in a farmhouse full of lady boarders, and he the only gentleman short of Crawford’s. Strike, but hear me, Henrietta Spaulding! What was I to do about the half-dozen lessons I had taken before he told me I should never learn to use oil? Was I to offer to pay him for these, and not for the rest; or was I to treat the whole series as gratuitous? I used to lie awake thinking about it. I’ve got some little tact, but I couldn’t find any way out of the trouble.

It was a box—yes, a box of the deepest dye ! And the whole affair having got to be—something else, don't you know?—made it all the worse. And if he'd only—only—But he didn't. Not a syllable, not a breath ! And there I was. I *had* to offer him the money. And it's almost killed me—the way he took my offering it, and now the way you take it ! And it's all of a piece." MISS REED suddenly snatches her handkerchief from her pocket, and buries her face in it.—“ Oh dear—oh dear ! Oh !—hu, hu, hu ! ”

MISS SPAULDING, relenting : “ It was awkward.”

MISS REED : “ Awkward ! You seem to think that because I carry things off lightly I have no feeling.”

MISS SPAULDING : “ You know I don't think that, Ethel.”

MISS REED, pursuing her advantage : “ I don't know it from you, Nettie. I've tried and *tried* to pass it off as a joke, and to treat it as something funny ; but I can tell you it's no joke at all.”

MISS SPAULDING, sympathetically : “ I see, dear.”

MISS REED : “ It's not that I care for him—”

MISS SPAULDING : " Why, of course."

MISS REED : " For I don't in the least. He is horrid every way : blunt, and rude, and horrid. I never cared for him. But I care for myself ! He has put me in the position of having done an unkind thing—an unladylike thing—when I was only doing what I had to do. Why need he have taken it the way he did ? Why couldn't he have said politely that he couldn't accept the money because he hadn't earned it ? Even *that* would have been mortifying enough. But he must go and be so violent, and rush off, and— Oh, I never could have treated anybody so !"

MISS SPAULDING : " Not unless you were very fond of them."

MISS REED : " What ?"

MISS SPAULDING : " Not unless you were very fond of them."

MISS REED, putting away her handkerchief : " Oh, nonsense, Nettie ! He never cared anything for me, or he couldn't have acted so. But no matter for that. He has fixed everything so that it can never be got straight—never in the world. It will just have to remain a hideous mass of—of—I don't know what ; and I have simply got to go on withering with despair at the point

where I left off. But I don't care ! That's one comfort."

MISS SPAULDING : " I don't believe he'll let you wither long, Ethel."

MISS REED : " He's let me wither for twenty-four hours already ! But it's nothing to me, now, *how* long he let's me wither. I'm perfectly satisfied to have the affair remain as it is. I am in the right, and if he comes I shall refuse to see him."

MISS SPAULDING : " Oh no, you won't, Ethel !"

MISS REED : " Yes, I shall. I shall receive him very coldly. I won't listen to any excuse from him."

MISS SPAULDING : " Oh yes, you will, Ethel !"

MISS REED : " No, I shall not. If he wishes me to listen, he must begin by humbling himself in the dust—yes, the dust, Nettie ! I won't take anything short of it. I insist that he shall realise that I have suffered."

MISS SPAULDING : " Perhaps he has suffered, too !"

MISS REED : " Oh, *he* suffered !"

MISS SPAULDING : " You know that he was perfectly devoted to you."

MISS REED : " He never said so."

MISS SPAULDING : "Perhaps he didn't dare."

MISS REED : "He dared to be very insolent to me."

MISS SPAULDING : "And you know you liked him very much."

MISS REED : "I won't let you say that, Nettie Spaulding. I *didn't* like him. I respected and admired him ; but I didn't *like* him. He will never come near me ; but if he does he has to begin by—by—Let me see, what shall I make him begin by doing?" She casts up her eyes for inspiration while she leans forward over the register. "Yes, I will ! He has got to begin by taking that money !"

MISS SPAULDING : "Ethel, you *wouldn't* put that affront upon a sensitive and high-spirited man !"

MISS REED : "Wouldn't I ? You wait and see, Miss Spaulding ! He shall take the money, and he shall sign a receipt for it. I'll draw up the receipt now, so as to have it ready, and I shall ask him to sign it the very moment he enters this door—the very instant !" She takes a portfolio from the table near her, without rising, and writes : "Received from Miss Ethel Reed one hundred and twenty-five dollars, in full,

for twenty-five lessons in oil-painting.' There—when Mr. Oliver Ransom has signed this little document he may begin to talk ; not before !” She leans back in her chair with an air of pitiless determination.

MISS SPAULDING : “ But, Ethel, you don't mean to make him take money for the lessons he gave you after he told you you couldn't learn anything ? ”

MISS REED, after a moment's pause : “ Yes, I do. This is to punish him. I don't wish for justice now ; I wish for vengeance ! At first I would have compromised on the six lessons, or on none at all, if he had behaved nicely, but after what's happened I shall insist upon paying him for every lesson, so as to make him feel that the whole thing, from first to last, was a purely business transaction on my part. Yes, a *purely*—BUSINESS—TRANSACTION ! ”

MISS SPAULDING, turning to her music : “ Then I've got nothing more to say to you, Ethel Reed.”

MISS REED : “ I don't say but what, after he's taken the money and signed the receipt, I'll listen to anything else he's got to say, very willingly.” MISS SPAULDING makes no answer, but begins to play with a scientific absorption, feeling her way

fitfully through the new piece, while MISS REED, seated by the register, trifles with the book she has taken from the table.

II

THE interior of the room of MISS SPAULDING and MISS REED remains in view, while the scene discloses, on the other side of the partition wall in the same house, the bachelor apartment of MR. SAMUEL GRINNIDGE. MR. GRINNIDGE in his dressing-gown and slippers, with his pipe in his mouth, has the effect of having just come in; his friend, MR. OLIVER RANSOM stands at the window, staring out into the November weather.

GRINNIDGE: "How long have you been waiting here?"

RANSOM: "Ten minutes—ten years. How should I know?"

GRINNIDGE: "Well, I don't know who else should. Get back to-day?"

RANSOM: "Last night."

GRINNIDGE: "Well, take off your coat, and pull up to the register, and warm your poor feet." He puts his hand out over the

register. "Confound it! somebody's got the register open in the next room! You see, one pipe comes up from the furnace and branches into a V just under the floor, and professes to heat both rooms. But it don't. There was a fellow in there last winter who used to get all my heat. Used to go out and leave his register open, and I'd come in here just before dinner and find this place as cold as a barn. We had a running fight of it all winter. The man who got his register open first in the morning got all the heat for the day, for it never turned the other way when it started in one direction. Used to almost suffocate—warm, muggy days—maintaining my rights. Some piano-pounder in there this winter, it seems. Hear? And she hasn't lost any time in learning the trick of the register. What kept you so late in the country?"

RANSOM, after an absent-minded pause: "Grinnidge, I wish you would give me some advice."

GRINNIDGE: "You can have all you want of it at the market price."

RANSOM: "I don't mean your legal advice."

GRINNIDGE: "I'm sorry. What have you been doing?"

RANSOM : " I 've been making an ass of myself."

GRINNIDGE : " Wasn't that rather superfluous?"

RANSOM : " If you please, yes. But now, if you're capable of listening to me without any further display of your cross-examination wit, I should like to tell you how it happened."

GRINNIDGE : " I will do my best to veil my brilliancy. Go on."

RANSOM : " I went up to Ponkwasset early in September for the foliage."

GRINNIDGE : " And stayed till late in October. There must have been a reason for that. What was *her* name? Foliage?"

RANSOM, coming up to the corner of the chimney-piece, near which his friend sits, and talking to him directly over the register : " I think you'll have to get along without the name for the present. I'll tell you by and by." As MR. RANSOM pronounces these words, MISS REED, on her side of the partition, lifts her head with a startled air, and, after a moment of vague circumspection, listens keenly. " But she *was* beautiful. She was a blonde, and she had the loveliest eyes—eyes, you know, that could be funny or tender, just as she

chose—the kind of eyes I always liked.” MISS REED leans forward over the register. “She had one of those faces that always leave you in doubt whether they’re laughing at you, and so keep you in wholesome subjection ; but you feel certain that they’re *good*, and that if they did hurt you by laughing at you, they’d look sorry for you afterward. When she walked you saw what an exquisite creature she was. It always made me mad to think I couldn’t *paint* her walk.”

GRINNIDGE : “ I suppose you saw a good deal of her walk.”

RANSOM : “ Yes ; we were off in the woods and fields half the time together.” He takes a turn toward the window.

MISS REED, suddenly shutting the register on her side : “ Oh ! ”

MISS SPAULDING, looking up from her music : “ What is it, Ethel ? ”

MISS REED : “ Nothing, nothing ; I—I—thought it was getting too warm. Go on, dear ; don’t let me interrupt you.” After a moment of heroic self-denial she softly presses the register open with her foot.

RANSOM, coming back to the register : “ It all began in that way. I had the

good fortune one day to rescue her from a—cow.”

MISS REED : “ Oh, for shame ! ”

MISS SPAULDING, desisting from her piano : “ What is the matter ? ”

MISS REED, clapping the register to : “ This ridiculous book ! But don’t—don’t mind me, Nettie.” Breathlessly : “ Go—go—on ! ” MISS SPAULDING resumes, and again MISS REED softly presses the register open.

RANSOM, after a pause : “ The cow was grazing, and had no more thought of hooking Miss—”

MISS REED : “ Oh, I didn’t suppose he *would* !—Go on, Nettie, go on ! The hero—*such* a goose ! ”

RANSOM : “ I drove her away with my camp-stool, and Miss—the young lady—was as grateful as if I had rescued her from a menagerie of wild animals. I walked home with her to the farmhouse, and the trouble began at once.” Pantomime of indignant protest and burlesque menace on the part of MISS REED. “ There wasn’t another well woman in the house, except her friend Miss Spaulding, who was rather old and rather plain.” He takes another turn to the window.

MISS REED : “ Oh ! ” She shuts the

register, but instantly opens it again.
“Louder, Nettie.”

MISS SPAULDING, in astonishment:
“What?”

MISS REED: “Did I speak? I didn’t know it. I—”

MISS SPAULDING, desisting from practice:
“What is that strange, hollow, rumbling, mumbling kind of noise?”

MISS REED, softly closing the register with her foot: “I don’t hear any strange, hollow, rumbling, mumbling kind of noise. Do you hear it *now*?”

MISS SPAULDING: “No. It was the Brighton whistle, probably.”

MISS REED: “Oh, very likely.” As MISS SPAULDING turns again to her practice MISS REED re-opens the register and listens again. A little interval of silence ensues, while RANSOM lights a cigarette.

GRINNIDGE: “So you sought opportunities of rescuing her from other cows?”

RANSOM, returning: “That wasn’t necessary. The young lady was so impressed by my behaviour, that she asked if I would give her some lessons in the use of oil.”

GRINNIDGE: “She thought if she knew how to paint pictures like yours she

wouldn't need any one to drive the cows away."

RANSOM: "Don't be farcical, Grinnidge. That sort of thing will do with some victim on the witness-stand who can't help himself. Of course I said I would, and we were off half the time together, painting the loveliest and loneliest bits around Ponkwasset. It all went on very well, till one day I felt bound in conscience to tell her that I didn't think she would ever learn to paint, and that if she was serious about it she'd better drop it at once, for she was wasting her time."

GRINNIDGE, getting up to fill his pipe: "That was a pleasant thing to do."

RANSOM: "I told her that if it amused her, to keep on; I would be only too glad to give her all the hints I could, but that I oughtn't to encourage her. She seemed a good deal hurt. I fancied at the time that she thought I was tired of having her with me so much."

MISS REED: "Oh, *did* you, indeed!" To MISS SPAULDING, who bends an astonished glance upon her from the piano: "The man in this book is the most *conceited* creature, Nettie. Play chords—something very subdued—ah!"

MISS SPAULDING : "What *are* you talking about, Ethel?"

RANSOM : "That was at night ; but the next day she came up smiling, and said that if I didn't mind she would keep on—for amusement ; she wasn't a bit discouraged."

MISS REED : "Oh !—Go on, Nettie ; don't let my outbursts interrupt you."

RANSOM : "I used to fancy sometimes that she *was* a little sweet on me."

MISS REED : "You wretch !—Oh, scales, Nettie ! Play scales !"

MISS SPAULDING : "Ethel Reed, are you crazy?"

RANSOM, after a thoughtful moment : "Well, so it went on for the next seven or eight weeks. When we weren't sketching in the meadows, or on the mountain-side, or in the old punt on the pond, we were walking up and down the farmhouse piazza together. She used to read to me when I was at work. She had a heavenly voice, Grinnidge."

MISS REED : "Oh, you silly, silly thing !—Really this book makes me sick, Nettie."

RANSOM : "Well, the long and the short of it was, I was hit—*hard*, and I lost all courage. You know how I am, Grinnidge."

MISS REED, softly : "Oh, poor fellow !"

RANSOM: "So I let the time go by, and at the end I hadn't said anything."

MISS REED: "No, sir! You *hadn't!*"
MISS SPAULDING gradually ceases to play, and fixes her attention wholly upon MISS REED, who bends forward over the register with an intensely excited face.

RANSOM: "Then something happened that made me glad, for twenty-four hours at least, that I hadn't spoken. She sent me the money for twenty-five lessons. Imagine how I felt, Grinnidge! What could I suppose but that she had been quietly biding her time, and storing up her resentment for my having told her she couldn't learn to paint, till she could pay me back with interest in one supreme insult?"

MISS REED, in a low voice: "Oh, how could you think such a cruel, vulgar thing?" MISS SPAULDING leaves the piano, and softly approaches her, where she has sunk on her knees beside the register.

RANSOM: "It was tantamount to telling me that she had been amusing herself with me instead of my lessons. It remanded our whole association, which I had got to thinking so romantic, to the relation of teacher and pupil. It was a snub—a heartless, kill-

ing snub ; and I couldn't see it in any other light." RANSOM walks away to the window, and looks out.

MISS REED, flinging herself backward from the register, and hiding her face in her hands : " Oh, it wasn't ! it wasn't ! it wasn't ! *How* could you think so ? "

MISS SPAULDING, rushing forward, and catching her friend in her arms : " What is the matter with you, Ethel Reed ? What are you doing here, over the register ? Are you trying to suffocate yourself ? Have you taken leave of your senses ? "

GRINNIDGE : " Our fair friend on the other side of the wall seems to be on the rampage. "

MISS SPAULDING, shutting the register with a violent clash : " Ugh ! how hot it is here ! "

GRINNIDGE : " Doesn't like your conversation, apparently. "

MISS REED, frantically pressing forward to open the register : " Oh, don't shut it, Nettie, dear ! If you do I shall die ! Do-o-n't shut the register ! "

MISS SPAULDING : " Don't shut it ? Why, we've got all the heat of the furnace in the room now. Surely you don't want any more ? "

MISS REED: "No, no; not any more. But—but— Oh, dear! what shall I do?" She still struggles in the embrace of her friend.

GRINNIDGE, remaining quietly at the register, while RANSOM walks away to the window: "Well, what did you do?"

MISS REED: "There, there! They're commencing again! *Do* open it, Nettie. I *will* have it open!" She wrenches herself free, and dashes the register open.

GRINNIDGE: "Ah, she's opened it again."

MISS REED, in a stage-whisper: "That's the other one!"

RANSOM, from the window: "Do? I'll tell you what I did."

MISS REED: "That's Ol—Mr. Ransom. And, oh, I can't make out what he's saying! He must have gone away to the other side of the room—and it's at the most important point!"

MISS SPAULDING, in an awful undertone: "Was *that* the hollow rumbling I heard? And have you been listening at the register to what they've been saying? O *Ethel*!"

MISS REED: "I haven't been listening, exactly."

MISS SPAULDING : " You have ! You have been eavesdropping ! "

MISS REED : " Eavesdropping is listening through a key-hole, or around a corner. This is very different. Besides, it's Oliver, and he's been talking about *me*. Hark ! " She clutches her friend's hand, where they have crouched upon the floor together, and pulls her forward to the register. " Oh, dear, how hot it is ! I wish they would cut off the heat down below. "

GRINNIDGE, smoking peacefully through the silence which his friend has absent-mindedly let follow upon his last words : " Well, you seem disposed to take your time about it. "

RANSOM : " About what ? Oh yes ! Well— "

MISS REED : " ' Sh ! Listen. "

MISS SPAULDING : " I won't listen ! It's shameful : it's wicked ! I don't see how you can do it, Ethel ! " She remains, however, kneeling near the register, and she involuntarily inclines a little more toward it.

RANSOM : " —It isn't a thing that I care to shout from the housetops. " He returns from the window to the chimney-piece. " I wrote the rudest kind of note, and sent

back her letter and her money in it. She had said that she hoped our acquaintance was not to end with the summer, but that we might sometimes meet in Boston ; and I answered that our acquaintance had ended already, and that I should be sorry to meet her anywhere again."

GRINNIDGE: "Well, if you wanted to make an ass of yourself, you did it pretty completely."

MISS REED, whispering: "How witty he is! Those men are always so humorous with each other."

RANSOM: "Yes; I didn't do it by halves."

MISS REED, whispering: "Oh, *that's* funny, too!"

GRINNIDGE: "It didn't occur to you that she might feel bound to pay you for the first half-dozen, and was embarrassed how to offer to pay for them alone?"

MISS REED: "How he *does* go to the heart of the matter!" She presses MISS SPAULDING'S hand in an ecstasy of approval.

RANSOM: "Yes, it did—afterward."

MISS REED, in a tender murmur: "Oh, *poor* Oliver!"

RANSOM: "And it occurred to me that she was perfectly right in the whole affair."

MISS REED : "Oh, how generous ! how noble !"

RANSOM : "I had had a thousand opportunities, and I hadn't been man enough to tell her that I was in love with her."

MISS REED : "How can he say it right out so bluntly ? But if it's true—"

RANSOM : "I *couldn't* speak. I was afraid of putting an end to the affair—of frightening her—disgusting her."

MISS REED : "Oh, how little they know us, Nettie !"

RANSOM : "She seemed so much above me in every way—so sensitive, so refined, so gentle, so good, so angelic !"

MISS REED : "There ! *Now* do you call it eavesdropping ? If listeners never hear any good of themselves, what do you say to that ? It proves that I haven't been listening."

MISS SPAULDING : "'Sh ! They're saying something else."

RANSOM : "But all that's neither here nor there. I can see now that under the circumstances she couldn't as a lady have acted otherwise than she did. She was forced to treat our whole acquaintance as a business matter, and I had forced her to do it."

MISS REED: "You *had*, you poor thing!"

GRINNIDGE: "Well, what do you intend to do about it?"

RANSOM: "Well—"

MISS REED: "'Sh!"

MISS SPAULDING: "'Sh!"

RANSOM: "—That's what I want to submit to you, Grinnidge. I must see her."

GRINNIDGE: "Yes. I'm glad *I* mustn't."

MISS REED, stifling a laugh on MISS SPAULDING'S shoulder: "They're actually *afraid* of us, Nettie!"

RANSOM: "See her, and go down in the dust."

MISS REED: "My very words!"

RANSOM: "I have been trying to think what was the very humblest pie I could eat, by way of penance; and it appears to me that I had better begin by saying that I have come to ask her for the money I refused."

MISS REED, enraptured: "Oh! doesn't it seem just like — like — inspiration Nettie?"

MISS SPAULDING: "'Sh! Be quiet, do You'll frighten them away!"

GRINNIDGE: "And then what?"

RANSOM: "What then? I don't know

what then. But it appears to me that, as a gentleman, I've got nothing to do with the result. All that I've got to do is to submit to my fate, whatever it is."

MISS REED, breathlessly: "What princely courage! What delicate magnanimity! Oh, he needn't have the *least* fear! If I could only tell him that!"

GRINNIDGE, after an interval of meditative smoking: "Yes, I guess that's the best thing you can do. It will strike her fancy, if she's an imaginative girl, and she'll think you a fine fellow."

MISS REED: "Oh, the horrid thing!"

GRINNIDGE: "If you humble yourself to a woman at all, do it thoroughly. If you go half-way down she'll be tempted to push you the rest of the way. If you flatten out at her feet to begin with, ten to one she will pick you up."

RANSOM: "Yes, that was my idea."

MISS REED: "Oh, was it, indeed! Well!"

RANSOM: "But I've nothing to do with her picking me up or pushing me down. All that I've got to do is to go and surrender myself."

GRINNIDGE: "Yes. Well; I guess you can't go too soon. I like your company;

but I advise you as a friend not to lose time. Where does she live?"

RANSOM: "That's the remarkable part of it: she lives in this house."

MISS REED and MISS SPAULDING, in subdued chorus: "Oh!"

GRINNIDGE, taking his pipe out of his mouth in astonishment: "No!"

RANSOM: "I just came in here to give my good resolutions a rest while I was screwing my courage up to ask for her."

MISS REED: "Don't you think he's *very* humorous? Give his good resolutions a rest! That's the way he *always* talks."

MISS SPAULDING: "'Sh!"

GRINNIDGE: "You said you came for my advice."

RANSOM: "So I did. But I didn't promise to act upon it. Well!" He goes toward the door.

GRINNIDGE, without troubling himself to rise: "Well, good luck to you!"

MISS REED: "How droll they are with each other! Don't you *like* to hear them talk? Oh, I could listen all day."

GRINNIDGE, calling after RANSOM: "You haven't told me your duck's name."

MISS REED: "Is *that* what they call us? Duck! Do you think it's very respectful,

Nettie? I don't believe I like it. Or, yes, why not? It's no harm—if I *am* his duck!”

RANSOM, coming back: “Well, I don't propose to go shouting it round. Her name is Miss Reed—Ethel Reed.”

MISS REED: “How *can* he?”

GRINNIDGE: “Slender, willowy party, with a lot of blonde hair that looks as if it might be indigenous? Rather pensive-looking?”

MISS REED: “Indigenous! I should hope so!”

RANSOM: “Yes. But she isn't pensive. She's awfully deep. It makes me shudder to think how deep that girl is. And when I think of my courage in daring to be in love with her—a stupid, straightforward idiot like me—I begin to respect myself in spite of being such an ass. Well, I'm off. If I stay any longer I shall never go.” He closes the door after him, and MISS REED instantly springs to her feet.

MISS REED: “Now he'll have to go down to the parlour and send up his name, and that just gives me time to do the necessary prinking. You stay here and receive him, Nettie.”

MISS SPAULDING: “Never! After what's

happened I can never look him in the face again. Oh, how low, and mean, and guilty I feel ! ”

MISS REED, with surprise : “ Why, how droll ! Now *I* don’t feel the least so.”

MISS SPAULDING : “ Oh, it’s very different with *you*. *You’re* in love with him.”

MISS REED : “ For shame, Nettie ! I’m *not* in love with him.”

MISS SPAULDING : “ And you can explain and justify it. But I never can justify it to myself, much less to him. Let me go, Ethel ! I shall tell Mrs. McKnight that we must change this room instantly. And just after I’d got it so nearly in order ! Go down and receive him in the parlour, Ethel. I *can’t* see him.”

MISS REED : “ Receive him in the parlour ! Why, Nettie, dear, you’re crazy ! I’m going to *accept* him : and how can I accept him—with all the consequences—in a public parlour ? No, indeed ! If you won’t meet him here for a moment, just to oblige me, you can go into the other room. Or, no—you’d be listening to every word through the key-hole, you’re so demoralised ! ”

MISS SPAULDING : “ Yes, yes, I deserve your contempt, Ethel.”

MISS REED, laughing: "You will have to go out for a walk, you poor thing; and I'm not going to have you coming back in five or ten minutes. You have got to stay out a good hour."

MISS SPAULDING, running to get her things from the next room: "Oh, I'll stay out till midnight!"

MISS REED, responding to a tap at the door: "Ye-e-s! Come in!—You're caught, Nettie."

A MAID-SERVANT, appearing with a card: "This gentleman is asking for you in the parlour, Miss Reed."

MISS REED: "Oh! Ask him to come up here, please.—Nettie! Nettie!" She calls to her friend in the next room. "He's coming right up, and if you don't run you're trapped."

MISS SPAULDING, re-appearing, cloaked and bonneted: "I don't blame *you*, Ethel, comparatively speaking. You can say that everything is fair in love. He will like it, and laugh at it in you, because he'll like everything you've done. Besides, you've no principles, and I *have*."

MISS REED: "Oh, I've lots of principles, Nettie, but I've no practice!"

MISS SPAULDING: "No matter. There's

no excuse for me. I listened simply because I was a woman, and couldn't help it; and, oh, what will he think of me?"

MISS REED: "I won't give you away; if you really feel so badly—"

MISS SPAULDING: "Oh, *do* you think you can keep from telling him, Ethel dear? Try! And I will be your slave for ever!" Steps are heard on the stairs outside. "Oh, there he comes!" She dashes out of the door, and closes it after her, a moment before the maid-servant, followed by MR. RANSOM, taps at it.

III

SCENE: MISS REED opens the door and receives MR. RANSOM with well-affected surprise and state, suffering him to stand awkwardly on the threshold for a moment.

SHE, coldly: "Oh!—Mr. Ransom!"

HE, abruptly: "I've come—"

SHE: "Won't you come in?"

HE, advancing a few paces into the room: "I've come—"

SHE, indicating a chair: "Will you sit down?"

HE: "I must stand for the present. I've

come to ask you for that money, Miss Reed, which I refused yesterday, in terms that I blush to think of. I was altogether and wholly in the wrong, and I'm ready to offer any imaginable apology or reparation. I'm ready to take the money and to sign a receipt, and then to be dismissed with whatever ignominy you please. I deserve anything—everything!”

SHE: “The money? Excuse me; I don't know—I'm afraid that I'm not prepared to pay you the whole sum to-day.”

HE, hastily: “Oh, no matter! no matter! I don't care for the money now. I merely wish to—to assure you that I thought you were perfectly right in offering it, and to—to—”

SHE: “What?”

HE: “Nothing. That is—ah—ah—”

SHE: “It's extremely embarrassing to have people refuse their money when it's offered them, and then come the next day for it, when perhaps it isn't so convenient to pay it—*very* embarrassing.”

HE, hotly: “But I tell you I don't want the *money*! I never wanted it, and wouldn't take it on any account.”

SHE: “Oh! I thought you said you came to get it?”

HE: "I said—I didn't say—I meant—that is—ah—I—" He stops, open-mouthed.

SHE, quietly: "I could give you part of the money now."

HE: "Oh, whatever you like: it's indifferent—"

SHE: "Please sit down while I write a receipt." She places herself deliberately at the table, and opens her portfolio. "I will pay you now, Mr. Ransom, for the first six lessons you gave me—the ones before you told me that I could never learn to do anything."

HE, sinking mechanically into the chair she indicates: "Oh, just as you like!" He looks up at the ceiling in hopeless bewilderment, while she writes.

SHE, blotting the paper: "There! And now let me offer you a little piece of advice, Mr. Ransom, which may be useful to you in taking pupils hereafter."

HE, bursting out: "I never take pupils!"

SHE: "Never take pupils! I don't understand. You took *me*."

HE, confusedly: "I took you—yes. You seemed to wish—you seemed—the case was peculiar—peculiar circumstances."

SHE, with severity: "May I ask *why* the circumstances were peculiar? I saw nothing

peculiar about the circumstances. It seemed to me it was a very simple matter. I told you that I had always had a great curiosity to see whether I could use oil paints, and I asked you a very plain question whether you would let me study with you. Didn't I?"

HE: "Yes."

SHE: "Was there anything wrong—anything queer about my asking you?"

HE: "No, no! Not at all—not in the least."

SHE: "Didn't you wish me to take the lessons of you? If you didn't, it wasn't kind of you to let me."

HE: "Oh, I was perfectly willing—very glad indeed, very much so—certainly!"

SHE: "If it wasn't your *custom* to take pupils, you ought to have told me, and I wouldn't have forced myself upon you."

HE, desperately: "It wasn't forcing yourself upon me. The Lord knows how humbly grateful I was. It was like a hope of heaven!"

SHE: "Really, Mr. Ransom, this is very strange talk. What am I to understand by it? *Why* should you be grateful to teach me? Why should giving me lessons be like a hope of heaven?"

HE: "Oh, I will tell you!"

SHE: "Well?"

HE, after a moment of agony: "Because to be with you—"

SHE: "Yes?"

HE: "Because I wished to be with you. Because—those days in the woods, when you read, and I—"

SHE: "Painted on my pictures—"

HE: "Were the happiest of my life. Because—I loved you!"

SHE: "Mr. Ransom!"

HE: "Yes, I must tell you so. I loved you; I love you still. I shall always love you, no matter what—"

SHE: "You forget yourself, Mr. Ransom. Has there been anything in my manner—conduct—to justify you in using such language to me?"

HE: "No—no—"

SHE: "Did you suppose that because I first took lessons of you from—from—an enthusiasm for art, and then continued them for—for—amusement, that I wished you to make love to me?"

HE: "No, I never supposed such a thing. I'm incapable of it. I beseech you to believe that no one could have more respect—reverence—" He twirls his hat between his hands, and casts an imploring glance at her.

SHE: "Oh, respect—reverence! I know what they mean in the mouths of men. If you respected, if you revered me, could you dare to tell me, after my unguarded trust of you during the past months, that you had been all the time secretly in love with me!"

HE, plucking up a little courage: "I don't see that the three things are incompatible."

SHE: "Oh, then you acknowledge that you did presume upon something you thought you saw in me to tell me that you loved me, and that you were in love with me all the time?"

HE, contritely: "I have no right to suppose that you encouraged me; and yet—I can't deny it now—I was in love with you all the time."

SHE: "And you never said a word to let me believe that you had any such feeling toward me!"

HE: "I—I—"

SHE: "You would have parted from me without a syllable to suggest it—perhaps parted from me for ever?" After a pause of silent humiliation for him: "Do you call that brave or generous? Do you call it manly—supposing, as you hoped, that I had any such feeling?"

HE: "No; it was cowardly, it was mean, it was unmanly. I see it now, but I will spend my life in repairing the wrong, if you will only let me." He impetuously advances some paces toward her, and then stops, arrested by her irresponsible attitude.

SHE, with a light sigh, and looking down at the paper, which she has continued to hold between her hands: "There was a time—a moment—when I might have answered as you wish."

HE: "Oh! then there will be again. If you have changed once, you may change once more. Let me hope that some time—any time, dearest—"

SHE, quenching him with a look: "Mr. Ransom, I shall *never* change toward you! You confess that you had your opportunity, and that you despised it."

HE: "Oh! *not* despised it!"

SHE: "Neglected it."

HE: "Not wilfully—no. I confess that I was stupidly, vilely, pusillan—pusillan—illani—"

SHE: "'Mously—"

HE: "Thanks—'mously unworthy of it; but I didn't despise it; I didn't neglect it; and if you will only let me show by a lifetime of devotion how dearly and truly I

have loved you from the first moment I drove that cow away—”

SHE: “Mr. Ransom, I have told you that I should never change toward you. That cow was nothing when weighed in the balance against your being willing to leave a poor girl, whom you supposed interested in you, and to whom you had paid the most marked attention, without a word to show her that you cared for her. What is a cow, or a whole herd of cows, as compared with obliging a young lady to offer you money that you hadn’t earned, and then savagely flinging it back in her face? A yoke of oxen would be nothing—or a mad bull.”

HE: “Oh, I acknowledge it! I confess it.”

SHE: “And you own that I am right in refusing to listen to you now?”

HE, desolately: “Yes, yes.”

SHE: “It seems that you gave me lessons in order to be with me, and if possible to interest me in you; and then you were going away without a word.”

HE, with a groan; “It was only because I was afraid to speak.”

SHE: “Oh, is *that* any excuse?”

HE: “No; none.”

SHE: "A man ought always to have courage." After a pause, in which he stands before her with bowed head: "Then there's nothing for me but to give you this money."

HE, with sudden energy: "This is too much! I—"

SHE, offering him the bank-notes: "No; it is the exact sum. I counted it very carefully."

HE: "I won't take it; I can't! I'll never take it!"

SHE, standing with the money in her outstretched hand: "I have your word as a gentleman that you will take it."

HE, gasping: "Oh, well—I will take it—I will—" He clutches the money, and rushes toward the door. "Good evening; ah—good-bye—"

SHE, calling after him: "The receipt, Mr. Ransom! Please sign this receipt!" SHE waves the paper in the air.

HE: "Oh yes, certainly! Where is it—what—which—" HE rushes back to her, and seizing the receipt, feels blindly about for the pen and ink. "Where shall I sign?"

SHE: "Read it first."

HE: "Oh, it's all—all right—"

SHE: "I insist upon your reading it."

It's a business transaction. Read it aloud."

HE, desperately: "Well, well!" HE reads. "'Received from Miss Ethel Reed, in full, for twenty-five lessons in oil-painting, one hundred and twenty-five dollars, and her hand, heart, and dearest love for ever.'" HE looks up at her. "Ethel!"

SHE, smiling: "Sign it, sign it!"

HE, catching her in his arms and kissing her: "Oh yes—*here!*"

SHE, pulling a little away from him, and laughing: "Oh, oh! I only wanted *one* signature! Twenty autographs are too many, unless you'll let me trade them off, as the collectors do."

HE: "No; keep them all! I couldn't think of letting any one else have them. One more!"

SHE: "No; it's quite enough!" SHE frees herself, and retires beyond the table. "This unexpected affection—"

HE: "*Is* it unexpected—seriously?"

SHE: "What do you mean?"

HE: "Oh, nothing!"

SHE: "Yes, tell me!"

HE: "I hoped—I thought—perhaps—that you might have been prepared for some such demonstration on my part."

SHE: "And why did you think—hope—perhaps—*that*, Mr. Ransom, may I ask?"

HE: "If I hadn't, how should I have dared to speak?"

SHE: "Dared? You were obliged to speak! Well, since it's all over, I don't mind saying that I *did* have some slight apprehensions that something in the way of a declaration might be extorted from you."

HE: "Extorted? Oh!" He makes an impassioned rush toward her.

SHE, keeping the table between them: "No, no."

HE: "Oh, I merely wished to ask why you chose to make me suffer so, after I had come to the point."

SHE: "Ask it across the table, then." After a moment's reflection, "I made you suffer—I made you suffer—so that you might have a realising sense of what you had made *me* suffer."

HE, enraptured by this confession: "Oh, you angel!"

SHE, with tender magnanimity: "No; only a woman—a poor, trusting, foolish woman!" She permits him to surround the table, with imaginable results. Then, with her head on his shoulder: "You'll

never let me regret it, will you, darling? You'll never oblige me to punish you again, dearest, will you? Oh, it hurt *me* far worse to *see* your pain than it did you to—to—feel it!" On the other side of the partition, MR. GRINNIDGE'S pipe falls from his lips, parted in slumber, and shivers to atoms on the register: "Oh!" SHE flies at the register with a shriek of dismay, and is about to close it. "That wretch has been listening, and has heard every word!"

HE, preventing her: "What wretch? Where?"

SHE: "Don't you hear him, mumbling and grumbling there?"

GRINNIDGE: "Well, I swear! Cash value of twenty-five dollars, and untold toil in colouring it!"

RANSOM, listening with an air of mystification: "Who's that?"

SHE: "Gummidge, Grimmidge—whatever you called him. Oh!" SHE arrests herself in consternation. "Now I *have* done it!"

HE: "Done what?"

SHE: "Oh—nothing!"

HE: "I don't understand. Do you mean to say that my friend Grinnidge's room is on the other side of the wall, and that you can hear him talk through the register?" SHE

preserves the silence of abject terror. HE stoops over the register, and calls down it. "Grinnidge! Hallo!"

GRINNIDGE: "Hallo, yourself!"

RANSOM, to MISS REED: "Sounds like the ghostly squeak of the phonograph." To GRINNIDGE: "What's the trouble?"

GRINNIDGE: "Smashed my pipe. Dozed off and let it drop on this infernal register."

RANSOM, turning from the register with impressive deliberation: "Miss Reed, may I ask *how* you came to know that his name was Gummidge, or Grimmidge, or whatever I called him?"

SHE: "Oh dearest, I *can't* tell you!—Or—yes, I had better." Impulsively: "I will judge you by myself. I could forgive *you* anything!"

HE, doubtfully: "Oh, could you?"

SHE: "Everything! I had—I had better make a clean breast of it. Yes, I had. Though I don't like to. I—I listened!"

HE: "Listened!"

SHE: "Through the register to—to—what—you—were saying before you—came in here." Her head droops.

HE: "Then you heard everything?"

SHE: "Kill me, but don't look so at me!"

It was accidental at first—indeed it was ; and then I recognised your voice ; and then I knew you were talking about me ; and I had so much at stake ; and I did love you so dearly ! You *will* forgive me, darling ? It wasn't as if I were listening with any bad motive."

HE, taking her in his arms : "Forgive you ? Of course I do. But you must change this room at once, Ethel ; you see, you hear everything on the other side, too."

SHE : "Oh, not if you whisper on this. You couldn't hear *us* ?" At a dubious expression of his : "You *didn't* hear us ? If you did, I can never forgive you !"

HE : "It was accidental at first—indeed it was ; and then I recognised your voice ; and then I knew you were taking about me ; and I had so much at stake ; and I did love you so dearly !"

SHE : "All that has nothing whatever to do with it. How much did you hear ?"

HE, with exemplary meekness : "Only what you were saying before Grinnidge came in. You didn't whisper then. I had to wait there for him while—"

SHE : "While you were giving your good resolutions a rest ?"

HE : " While I was giving my good resolutions a rest."

SHE : " And that accounts for your determination to humble yourself so?"

HE : " It seemed perfectly providential that I should have known just what conditions you were going to exact of me."

SHE : " Oh, don't make light of it! I can tell you it's a very serious matter."

HE : " It was very serious for me when you didn't meet my self-abasement as you had led me to expect you would."

SHE : " Don't make fun! I'm trying to think whether I can forgive you."

HE, with insinuation : " Don't you believe you could think better if you put your head on my shoulder?"

SHE : " Nonsense! Then I should forgive you without thinking." After a season of reflection : " No, I *can't* forgive you. I never could forgive eavesdropping. It's *too* low."

HE, in astonishment : " Why, you did it yourself!"

SHE : " But you began it. Besides, it's very different for a man. Women are weak, poor, helpless creatures. They have to use finesse. But a man should be above it."

HE: "You said you could forgive me anything."

SHE: "Ah, but I didn't know what you'd been doing!"

HE, with pensive resignation, and a feint of going: "Then I suppose it's all over between us."

SHE, relenting: "If you could think of any reason *why* I should forgive you—"

HE: "I can't."

SHE, after consideration: "Do you suppose Mr. Grumage, or Grinnidge, heard too?"

HE: "No; Grinnidge is a very high-principled fellow, and wouldn't listen; besides, he wasn't there, you know."

SHE: "Well, then, I will forgive you on these grounds." HE instantly catches her to his heart. "But these alone, remember."

HE, rapturously: "Oh, on any!"

SHE, tenderly: "And you'll always be devoted? And nice? And not try to provoke me? Or neglect me? Or anything?"

HE: "Always! Never!"

SHE: "Oh you dear, sweet, simple old thing—how I *do* love you!"

GRINNIDGE, who has been listening atten-

tively to every word at the register at his side : " Ransom, if you don't want me to go stark mad, *shut the register !* "

RANSOM, about to comply : " Oh poor old man ! I forgot it was open ! "

MISS REED, preventing him : " No ! If he has been vile enough to listen at a register, let him suffer. Come, sit down here, and I'll tell you just when I began to care for you. It was long before the cow. Do you remember that first morning after you arrived " —SHE drags him close to the register, so that every word may tell upon the envious Grinidge, on whose manifestations of acute despair, a rapid curtain descends.

THE ELEVATOR

I

SCENE: Through the curtained doorway of MRS. EDWARD ROBERTS'S pretty drawing-room, in Hotel Bellingham, shows the snowy and gleaming array of a table set for dinner, under the dim light of gas-burners turned low. An air of expectancy pervades the place, and the uneasiness of MR. ROBERTS, in evening dress, expresses something more as he turns from a glance into the dining-room, and still holding the *portière* with one hand, takes out his watch with the other.

MR. ROBERTS to MRS. ROBERTS entering the drawing-room from regions beyond: "My dear, it's six o'clock. What can have become of your aunt?"

MRS. ROBERTS, with a little anxiety: "That was just what I was going to ask. She's never late; and the children are quite heart-broken. They had counted upon

seeing her, and talking Christmas a little before they were put to bed."

ROBERTS: "Very singular her not coming! Is she going to begin standing upon ceremony with us, and not come till the hour?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Nonsense, Edward! She's been detained. Of course she'll be here in a moment. How impatient you are!"

ROBERTS: "You must profit by me as an awful example."

MRS. ROBERTS, going about the room, and bestowing little touches here and there on its ornaments: "If you'd had that new cook to battle with over this dinner, you'd have learned patience by this time without any awful example."

ROBERTS, dropping nervously into the nearest chair: "I hope she isn't behind time."

MRS. ROBERTS, drifting upon the sofa, and disposing her train effectively on the carpet around her: "She's before time. The dinner is in the last moment of ripe perfection now, when we must still give people fifteen minutes' grace." She studies the convolutions of her train absently-mindedly.

ROBERTS, joining in its perusal: "Is that the way you've arranged to be sitting when people come in?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Of course not. I shall get up to receive them."

ROBERTS: "That's rather a pity. To destroy such a lovely pose."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Do you like it?"

ROBERTS: "It's divine."

MRS. ROBERTS: "You might throw me a kiss."

ROBERTS: "No; if it happened to strike on that train anywhere, it might spoil one of the folds. I can't risk it." A ring is heard at the apartment door. They spring to their feet simultaneously.

MRS. ROBERTS: "There's Aunt Mary now!" She calls into the vestibule, "Aunt Mary!"

DR. LAWTON, putting aside the vestibule *portière*, with affected timidity: "Very sorry. Merely a father."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh! Dr. Lawton? I am so glad to see you!" She gives him her hand: "I thought it was my aunt. We can't understand why see hasn't come. Why! where's Miss Lawton?"

LAWTON: "That is precisely what I was going to ask you."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Why, she isn't here."

LAWTON: "So it seems. I left her with the carriage at the door when I started to walk here. She called after me down the stairs that she would be ready in three seconds and begged me to hurry, so that we could come in together, and not let people know I'd saved half a dollar by walking."

MRS. ROBERTS: "*She's* been detained too!"

ROBERTS, coming forward: "Now you know what it is to have a delinquent Aunt-Mary-in-law."

LAWTON, shaking hands with him: "O Roberts! Is that you? It's astonishing how little one makes of the husband of a lady who gives a dinner. In my time—a long time ago—he used to carve. But nowadays, when everything is served *à la Russe*, he might as well be abolished. Don't you think, on the whole, Roberts, you'd better not have come?"

ROBERTS: "Well, you see, I had no excuse. I hated to say an engagement when I hadn't any."

LAWTON: "Oh, I understand. You *wanted* to come. We all do, when Mrs. Roberts will let us." He goes and sits down by MRS. ROBERTS, who has taken

a more provisional pose on the sofa. "Mrs. Roberts, you're the only woman in Boston who could hope to get people, with a fire-side of their own—or a register—out to a Christmas dinner. You know I still wonder at your effrontery a little?"

MRS. ROBERTS, laughing: "I knew I should catch you if I baited my hook with your old friend."

LAWTON: "Yes, nothing would have kept me away when I heard Bemis was coming. But he doesn't seem so inflexible in regard to me. Where is he?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "I'm sure I don't know. I'd no idea I was giving such a formal dinner. But everybody, beginning with my own aunt, seems to think it a ceremonious occasion. There are only to be twelve. Do you know the Millers?"

LAWTON: "No, thank goodness! One meets some people so often that one fancies one's weariness of them reflected in their sympathetic countenances. Who are these acceptably novel Millers?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Do explain the Millers to the doctor, Edward."

ROBERTS, standing on the hearthrug, with his thumbs in his waistcoat pockets: "They board."

LAWTON: "Genus. That accounts for their willingness to flutter round your evening lamp when they ought to be singeing their wings at their own. Well, species?"

ROBERTS: "They're very nice young newly-married people. He's something or other of some kind of manufactures. And Mrs. Miller is disposed to think that all the other ladies are as fond of him as she is."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh! That is not so, Edward."

LAWTON: "You defend your sex, as women always do. But you'll admit that, as your friend, Mrs. Miller may have this foible."

MRS. ROBERTS: "I admit nothing of the kind. And we've invited another young couple who haven't gone to housekeeping yet—the Curwens. And *he* has the same foible as Mrs. Miller." MRS. ROBERTS takes out her handkerchief, and laughs into it.

LAWTON: "That is, if Mrs. Miller has it, which we both deny. Let us hope that Mrs. Miller and Mr. Curwen may not get to making eyes at each other."

ROBERTS: "And Mr. Bemis and his son complete the list. Why, Agnes, there are only ten. You said there were twelve."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Well, never mind.

I meant ten. I forgot that the Somerses declined." A ring is heard. "Ah! *that's* Aunt Mary." She runs into the vestibule, and is heard exclaiming without: "Why, Mrs. Miller, is it you? I thought it was my aunt. Where is Mr. Miller?"

MRS. MILLER, entering the drawing-room arm in arm with her hostess: "Oh, he'll be here directly. I had to let him run back for my fan."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Well, we're very glad to have you to begin with. Let me introduce Dr. Lawton."

MRS. MILLER, in a polite murmur: "Dr. Lawton." In a louder tone: "O Mr. Roberts!"

LAWTON: "You see, Roberts? The same aggrieved surprise at meeting you here that I felt."

MRS. MILLER: "What in the world do you mean?"

LAWTON: "Don't you think that when a husband is present at his wife's dinner-party he repeats the mortifying superfluity of a bridegroom at a wedding?"

MRS. MILLER: "I'm *sure* I don't know what you mean. I should never think of giving a dinner without Mr. Miller."

LAWTON: "No!" A ring is heard. "There's Bemis."

MRS. MILLER : "It's Mr. Miller."

MRS. ROBERTS : "Aunt Mary at last !"
As she bustles toward the door : "Edward,
there *are* twelve — Aunt Mary and
Willis."

ROBERTS : "Oh yes. I totally forgot
Willis."

LAWTON : "Who's Willis?"

ROBERTS : "Willis? Oh, Willis is my
wife's brother. We always have him."

LAWTON : "Oh yes, Campbell."

MRS. ROBERTS, without : "Mr. Bemis !
So kind of you to come on Christmas."

MR. BEMIS, without : "So kind of you
to ask us houseless strangers."

MRS. ROBERTS, without : "I ran out
here, thinking it was my aunt. She's
played us a trick, and hasn't come yet."

BEMIS, entering the drawing-room with
MRS. ROBERTS : "I hope she won't fail
altogether. I haven't met her for twenty
years, and I counted so much upon the
pleasure— Hello, Lawton !"

LAWTON : "Hello, old fellow !" They
fly at each other, and shake hands. "Glad
to see you again."

BEMIS, reaching his left hand to MR.
ROBERTS, while DR. LAWTON keeps his
right : "Ah ! Mr. Roberts."

LAWTON : " Oh, never mind *him*. He's merely the husband of the hostess."

MRS. MILLER, to ROBERTS : " What *does* he mean ? "

ROBERTS : " Oh, nothing. Merely a joke he's experimenting with."

LAWTON to BEMIS : " Where's your boy ? "

BEMIS : " He'll be here directly. He preferred to walk. Where's your girl ? "

LAWTON : " Oh, she'll come by and by. She preferred to drive."

MRS. ROBERTS, introducing them : " Mr. Bemis, have you met Mrs. Miller ? " She drifts away again, manifestly too uneasy to resume even a provisional pose on the sofa, and walks detachedly about the room.

BEMIS : " What a lovely apartment Mrs. Roberts has."

MRS. MILLER : " Exquisite ! But then she has such perfect taste."

BEMIS, to MRS. ROBERTS, who drifts near them : " We were talking about your apartment, Mrs. Roberts. It's charming."

MRS. ROBERTS : " It *is* nice. It's the ideal way of living. All on one floor. No stairs. Nothing."

BEMIS : " Yes, when once you get

here ! But that little matter of five pair up—”

MRS. ROBERTS : “ You don’t mean to say you *walked* up ! Why in the world didn’t you take the elevator ? ”

BEMIS : “ I didn’t know you had one. ”

MRS. ROBERTS : “ It’s the only thing that makes life worth living in a flat. All these apartment hotels have them. ”

BEMIS : “ Bless me ! Well, you see, I’ve been away from Boston so long, and am back so short a time, that I can’t realise your luxuries and conveniences. In Florence we *always* walk up. They have *ascenseurs* in a few great hotels, and they brag of it in immense signs on the sides of the building. ”

LAWTON : “ What pastoral simplicity ! We are elevated here to a degree that you can’t conceive of, gentle shepherd. Has yours got an air-cushion, Mrs. Roberts ? ”

MRS. ROBERTS : “ An air-cushion ? What’s that ? ”

LAWTON : “ The only thing that makes your life worth a moment’s purchase in an elevator. You get in with a glass of water, a basket of eggs, and a file of the *Daily Advertiser*. They cut the elevator loose at the top, and you drop. ”

BOTH LADIES : " Oh ! "

LAWTON : " In three seconds you arrive at the ground-floor, reading your file of the *Daily Advertiser* ; not an egg broken nor a drop spilled. I saw it done in a New York hotel. The air is compressed under the elevator, and acts as a sort of ethereal buffer. "

MRS. ROBERTS : " And why don't we always go down in that way ? "

LAWTON : " Because sometimes the walls of the elevator shaft give out. "

MRS. ROBERTS : " And what then ? "

LAWTON : " Then the elevator stops more abruptly. I had a friend who tried it when this happened. "

MRS. ROBERTS : " And what did he do ? "

LAWTON : " Stepped out of the elevator ; laughed ; cried ; went home ; got into bed ; and did not get up for six weeks. Nervous shock. He was fortunate. "

MRS. MILLER : " I shouldn't think you'd want an air-cushion on *your* elevator, Mrs. Roberts. "

MRS. ROBERTS : " No, indeed ! Horrid ! " The bell rings. " Edward, *you* go and see if that's Aunt Mary. "

MRS. MILLER : " It's Mr. Miller, I know. "

BEMIS: "Or my son."

LAWTON: "My voice is for Mrs. Roberts's brother. I've given up all hopes of my daughter."

ROBERTS, without: "Oh, Curwen! Glad to see you! Thought you were my wife's aunt."

LAWTON, at a suppressed sigh from MRS. ROBERTS: "It's one of his jokes, Mrs. Roberts. Of course it's your aunt."

MRS. ROBERTS, through her set teeth, smilingly: "Oh, if it *is*, I'll make him suffer for it."

MR. CURWEN, without: "No, I hated to wait, so I walked up."

LAWTON: "It is Mr. Curwen after all, Mrs. Roberts. Now let me see how a lady transmutes a frown of threatened vengeance into a smile of society welcome."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Well, look!" To MR. CURWEN, who enters, followed by her husband: "Ah, Mr. Curwen! So glad to see you. You know all our friends here—Mrs. Miller, Dr. Lawton, and Mr. Bemis?"

CURWEN, smiling and bowing, and shaking hands right and left, "Very glad—very happy—pleased to know you."

MRS. ROBERTS, behind her fan to DR. LAWTON: "Didn't I do it beautifully?"

LAWTON, behind his hand: "Wonderfully! And so unconscious of the fact that he hasn't his wife with him."

MRS. ROBERTS, in great astonishment, to MR. CURWEN: "Where in the world is Mrs. Curwen?"

CURWEN: "Oh—oh—she'll be here. I thought she *was* here. She started from home with two right-hand gloves, and I had to go back for a left, and I—I suppose—Good heavens!" pulling the glove out of his pocket. "I ought to have sent it to her in the ladies' dressing-room." He remains with the glove held up before him, in spectacular stupefaction.

LAWTON: "Only imagine what Mrs. Curwen would be saying of you if she *were* in the dressing-room."

ROBERTS: "Mr. Curwen felt so sure she was there that he wouldn't wait to take the elevator, and walked up." Another ring is heard. "Shall I go and meet your aunt *now*, my dear?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "No, indeed! She may come in now with all the formality she chooses, and I will receive her excuses in state." She waves her fan softly to and fro, concealing a murmur of trepidation under an indignant air, till the *portière*

opens, and MR. WILLIS CAMPBELL enters. Then MRS. ROBERTS breaks in nervous agitation: "Why, Willis! Where's Aunt Mary?"

MRS. MILLER: "And Mr. Miller?"

CURWEN: "And Mrs. Curwen?"

LAWTON: "And my daughter?"

BEMIS: "And my son?"

MR. CAMPBELL, looking tranquilly round on the faces of his interrogators: "Is it a conundrum?"

MRS. ROBERTS, mingling a real distress with an effort of mock-heroic solemnity: "It is a tragedy! O Willis dear! it's what you see—what you hear; a niece without an aunt, a wife without a husband, a father without a son, and another father without a daughter."

ROBERTS: "And a dinner getting cold, and a cook getting hot."

LAWTON: "And you are expected to account for the whole situation."

CAMPBELL: "Oh, I understand! I don't know what your little game is, Agnes, but I can wait and see. *I'm* not hungry."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Willis, do you think I would try and play a trick on you, if I could?"

CAMPBELL: "I think you can't. Come,

now, Agnes ! It's a failure. Own up, and bring the rest of the company out of the next room. I suppose almost anything is allowable at this festive season, but this is pretty feeble."

MRS. ROBERTS : "Indeed, indeed, they are not there."

CAMPBELL : "Where are they, then?"

ALL : "That's what we don't know."

CAMPBELL : "Oh, come, now ! that's a little too thin. You don't know where *any* of all these blood-relations and connections by marriage are? Well, search me !"

MRS. ROBERTS, in open distress : "Oh, I'm sure something must have happened to Aunt Mary !"

MRS. MILLER : "I can't understand what Ellery C. Miller means."

LAWTON, with a simulated sternness : "I hope you haven't let that son of yours run away with my daughter, Bemis?"

BEMIS : "I'm afraid he's come to a pass where he wouldn't ask *my* leave."

CURWEN, reassuring himself : "Ah, she's all right, of course. I know that—"

BEMIS : "Miss Lawton?"

CURWEN : "No, no—Mrs. Curwen."

CAMPBELL : "Is it a true bill, Agnes?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Indeed it is, Willis. We've been expecting her for an hour—of course she always comes early—and I'm afraid she's been taken ill suddenly."

ROBERTS: "Oh, I don't think it's that, my dear."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, of course you never think anything's wrong, Edward. My whole family might die, and—" MRS. ROBERTS restrains herself, and turns to MR. CAMPBELL, with hysterical cheerfulness: "Who came up in the elevator with you?"

CAMPBELL: "Me? *I* didn't come in the elevator. I had my usual luck. The elevator was up somewhere, and after I'd pressed the annunciator button till my thumb ached, I watched my chance and walked up."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Where was the janitor?"

CAMPBELL: "Where the janitor always is—nowhere."

LAWTON: "Eating his Christmas dinner, probably."

MRS. ROBERTS, partially abandoning and then recovering herself: "Yes, it's perfectly spoiled! Well, friends, I think we'd better go to dinner—that's the only way to

bring them. I'll go out and interview the cook." *Sotto voce* to her husband: "If I don't go somewhere and have a cry, I shall break down here before everybody. Did you ever know anything so strange? It's perfectly—pokerish."

LAWTON: "Yes, there's nothing like serving dinner to bring the belated guest. It's as infallible as going without an umbrella when it won't rain."

CAMPBELL: "No, no! Wait a minute, Roberts. You might sit down without one guest, but you can't sit down without five. It's the old joke about the part of Hamlet. I'll just step round to Aunt Mary's house—why, I'll be back in three minutes."

MRS. ROBERTS, with fervid gratitude: "Oh, how *good* you are, Willis! You don't know how *much* you're doing! What presence of mind you have! Why couldn't we have thought of sending for her? O Willis, I can never be grateful enough to you! But you always think of everything."

ROBERTS: "I accept my punishment meekly, Willis, since it's in your honour."

LAWTON: "It's a simple and beautiful solution, Mrs. Roberts, as far as your aunt's

concerned ; but I don't see how it helps the rest of us."

MRS. MILLER to MR. CAMPBELL : " If you meet Mr. Miller—"

CURWEN : " Or my wife—"

BEMIS : " Or my son—"

LAWTON : " Or my daughter—"

CAMPBELL : " I'll tell them they've just one chance in a hundred to save their lives, and that one is open to them for just five minutes."

LAWTON : " Tell my daughter that I've been here half an hour, and everybody knows I drove here with her."

BEMIS : " Tell my son that the next time I'll walk, and let him drive."

MRS. MILLER : " Tell Mr. Miller I found I had my fan after all."

CURWEN : " And Mrs. Curwen that I've got her glove all right." He holds it up.

MRS. ROBERTS, at a look of mystification and demand from her brother : " Never mind explanations, Willis. They'll understand, and we'll explain when you get back."

LAWTON, examining the glove which CURWEN holds up : " Why, so it is right !"

CURWEN : " What do you mean ?"

LAWTON : " Were you sent back to get a *left* glove ?"

CURWEN : " Yes, yes ; of course."

LAWTON : " Well, if you'll notice, this is a right one. The one at home is left."

CURWEN, staring helplessly at it :
" Gracious Powers ! what shall I do ?"

LAWTON : " Pray that Mrs. Curwen may *never* come."

MR. CURWEN, dashing through the door :
" I'll be back by the time Mr. Campbell returns."

MRS. MILLER, with tokens of breaking down visible to MRS. ROBERTS : " I wonder what could have kept Mr. Miller. It's so very mysterious, I—"

MRS. ROBERTS, suddenly seizing her by the arm, and hurrying her from the room :
" Now, Mrs. Miller, you've just got time to see my baby."

MR. ROBERTS, winking at his remaining guests : " A little cry will do them good. I saw as soon as Willis came in instead of her aunt, that my wife couldn't get through without it. They'll come back as bright as—"

LAWTON : " Bemis, should you mind a bereaved father falling upon your neck ?"

BEMIS : " Yes, Lawton, I think I should."

LAWTON : " Well, it *is* rather odd about all those people. You can say of one or

two that they've been delayed, but five people can't have been delayed. It's too much. It amounts to a coincidence. Hello! What's that?"

ROBERTS: "What's what?"

LAWTON: "I thought I heard a cry."

ROBERTS: "Very likely you did. They profess to deaden these floors so that you can't hear from one apartment to another. But I know pretty well when my neighbour overhead is trying to wheel his baby to sleep in a perambulator at three o'clock in the morning; and I guess our young lady lets the people below understand when she's wakeful. But it's the only way to live, after all. I wouldn't go back to the old up-and-down-stairs, house-in-a-block system on any account. Here we all live on the ground floor practically. The elevator equalises everything."

BEMIS: "Yes, when it happens to be where you are. I believe I prefer the good old Florentine fashion of walking upstairs, after all."

LAWTON: "Roberts, I *did* hear something. Hark! It sounded like a cry for help. There!"

ROBERTS: "You're nervous, doctor. It's nothing. However, it's easy enough

to go out and see." He goes out to the door of the apartment, and immediately returns. He beckons to DR. LAWTON and MR. BEMIS, with a mysterious whisper: "Come here, both of you. Don't alarm the ladies."

II

IN the interior of the elevator are seated MRS. ROBERTS'S AUNT MARY (MRS. CRASHAW), MRS. CURWEN, and MISS LAWTON; MR. MILLER and MR. ALFRED BEMIS are standing with their hats in their hands. They are in dinner costume, with their overcoats on their arms, and the ladies' draperies and ribbons show from under their outer wraps, where they are caught up, and held with that caution which characterises ladies in sitting attitudes which they have not been able to choose deliberately. As they talk together, the elevator rises very slowly, and they continue talking for some time before they observe that it has stopped.

MRS. CRASHAW: "It's very fortunate that we are all here together. I ought to

have been here half an hour ago, but I was kept at home by an accident to my finery, and before I could be put in repair I heard it striking the quarter-past. I don't know what my niece will say to me. I hope you good people will all stand by me if she should be violent."

MILLER: "In what a poor man may with his wife's fan, you shall command me, Mrs. Crashaw." He takes the fan out and unfurls it.

MRS. CRASHAW: "Did she send you back for it?"

MILLER: "I shouldn't have had the pleasure of arriving with you if she hadn't."

MRS. CRASHAW, laughing, to MRS. CURWEN: "What did you send *yours* back for, my dear?"

MRS. CURWEN, thrusting out one hand gloved, and the other ungloved: "I didn't want two rights."

YOUNG MR. BEMIS: "Not even women's rights?"

MRS. CURWEN: "Oh, so young and so depraved! Are all the young men in Florence so bad?" Surveying her extended arms, which she turns over: "I don't know that I need have sent him for the other glove. I could have explained to Mrs.

Roberts. Perhaps she would have forgiven my coming in one glove."

MILLER, looking down at the pretty arms: "If she had seen you without."

MRS. CURWEN: "Oh, you were looking!" She rapidly involves her arms in her wrap. Then she suddenly unwraps them, and regards them thoughtfully. "What if he should bring a ten-button instead of an eight! And he's quite capable of doing it."

MILLER: "Are there such things as ten-button gloves?"

MRS. CURWEN: "You would think there were ten-thousand button gloves if you had them to button."

MILLER: "It would depend upon whom I had to button them for."

MRS. CURWEN: "For Mrs. Miller, for example."

MRS. CRASHAW: "We women are too bad, always sending people back for something. It's well the men don't know *how* bad."

MRS. CURWEN: "'Sh! Mr. Miller is listening. And he thought we were perfect. He asks nothing better than to be sent back for his wife's fan. And he doesn't say anything even under his breath when she finds she's forgotten it, and begins,

'Oh, dearest, my fan'—Mr. Curwen does. But he goes all the same. I hope you have your father in good training, Miss Lawton. You must commence with your father, if you expect your husband to be 'good.'"

MISS LAWTON: "Then mine will never behave, for papa is perfectly incorrigible."

MRS. CURWEN: "I'm sorry to hear such a bad report of him. Shouldn't *you* think he would be 'good,' Mr. Bemis?"

YOUNG MR. BEMIS: "I should think he would try."

MRS. CURWEN: "A diplomat, as well as a punster already! I must warn Miss Lawton."

MRS. CRASHAW, interposing to spare the young people: "What an amusing thing elevator etiquette is! Why should the gentlemen take their hats off? Why don't you take your hats off in a horse-car?"

MILLER: "The theory is that the elevator is a room."

YOUNG MR. BEMIS: "We were at a hotel in London where they called it the Ascending Room."

MISS LAWTON: "Oh, how amusing!"

MILLER, looking about: "This is a regular drawing-room for size and luxury. They're usually such cribs in these hotels."

MRS. CRASHAW: "Yes, it's very nice,

though I say it that shouldn't of my niece's elevator. The worst about it is, it's so slow."

MILLER: "Let's hope it's sure."

YOUNG MR. BEMIS: "Some of these elevators in America go up like express trains."

MRS. CURWEN, drawing her shawl about her shoulders, as if to be ready to step out: "Well I never get into one without taking my life in my hand, and my heart in my mouth. I suppose every one really expects an elevator to drop with them, some day, just as everybody really expects to see a ghost some time."

MRS. CRASHAW: "Oh, my dear! what an extremely disagreeable subject of conversation."

MRS. CURWEN: "I can't help it, Mrs. Crashaw. When I reflect that there are two thousand elevators in Boston, and that the inspectors have just pronounced a hundred and seventy of them unsafe, I'm so desperate when I get into one that I could—flirt!"

MILLER, guarding himself with the fan: "Not with me?"

MISS LAWTON, to young MR. BEMIS: "How it *does* creep!"

YOUNG MR. BEMIS, looking down fondly at her: "Oh, does it?"

MRS. CRASHAW: "Why, it doesn't go at all! It's stopped. Let us get out." They all rise.

THE ELEVATOR BOY, pulling at the rope: "We're not there, yet."

MRS. CRASHAW, with mingled trepidation and severity: "Not there? What are you stopping, then, for?"

THE ELEVATOR BOY: "I don't know. It seems to be caught."

MRS. CRASHAW: "Caught?"

MISS LAWTON: "Oh, dear!"

YOUNG MR. BEMIS: "Don't mind."

MILLER: "Caught? Nonsense!"

MRS. CURWEN: "*We're* caught, I should say." She sinks back on the seat.

THE ELEVATOR BOY: "Seemed to be going kind of funny all day!" He keeps tugging at the rope.

MILLER, arresting the boy's efforts: "Well, hold on—stop! What are you doing?"

THE ELEVATOR BOY: "Trying to make it go."

MILLER: "Well, don't be so—violent about it. You might break something."

THE ELEVATOR BOY: "Break a wire rope like that!"

MILLER: "Well, well, be quiet now. Ladies, I think you'd better sit down—and as gently as possible. I wouldn't move about much."

MRS. CURWEN: "Move! We're stone. And I wish for my part I were a feather."

MILLER, to the boy: "Er—a—er—where do you suppose we are?"

THE ELEVATOR BOY: "We're in the shaft between the fourth and fifth floors." He attempts a fresh demonstration on the rope, but is prevented.

MILLER: "Hold on! Er—er—"

MRS. CRASHAW, as if the boy had to be communicated with through an interpreter: "Ask him if it's ever happened before."

MILLER: "Yes. Were you ever caught before?"

THE ELEVATOR BOY: "No."

MILLER: "He says no."

MRS. CRASHAW: "Ask him if the elevator has a safety device."

MILLER: "Has it got a safety device?"

THE ELEVATOR BOY: "How should I know?"

MILLER: "He says he don't know."

MRS. CURWEN, in a shriek of hysterical laughter: "Why, he understands English!"

MRS. CRASHAW, sternly ignoring the

insinuation: "Ask him if there's any means of calling the janitor."

MILLER: "Could you call the janitor?"

THE ELEVATOR BOY, ironically: "Well, there ain't any telephone attachment."

MILLER, solemnly: "No, he says there isn't."

MRS. CRASHAW, sinking back on the seat with resignation: "Well, I don't know what my niece will say."

MISS LAWTON: "Poor papa!"

YOUNG MR. BEMIS, gathering one of her wandering hands into his: "Don't be frightened. I'm sure there's no danger."

THE ELEVATOR BOY, indignantly: "Why, she can't *drop*. The cogs in the runs won't let her!"

ALL: "Oh!"

MILLER, with a sigh of relief: "I knew there must be something of the kind. Well, I wish my wife had her fan."

MRS. CURWEN: "And if I had my left glove I should be perfectly happy. Not that I know what the cogs in the runs are!"

MRS. CRASHAW: "Then we're merely caught here?"

MILLER: "That's all."

MRS. CURWEN: "It's quite enough for

the purpose. Couldn't you put on a life-preserver, Mr. Miller, and go ashore and get help from the natives?"

MISS LAWTON, putting her handkerchief to her eyes: "Oh dear!"

MRS. CRASHAW, putting her arm around her: "Don't be frightened, my child. There's no danger."

YOUNG MR. BEMIS, caressing the hand which he holds: "Don't be frightened."

MISS LAWTON: "Don't leave me."

YOUNG MR. BEMIS: "No, no; I won't. Keep fast hold of my hand."

MISS LAWTON: "Oh yes, I will! I'm ashamed to cry."

YOUNG MR. BEMIS, fervently: "Oh, you needn't be! It is perfectly natural you should."

MRS. CURWEN: "I'm too badly scared for tears. Mr. Miller, you seem to be in charge of this expedition—couldn't you do something? Throw out ballast, or let the boy down in a parachute? Or I've read of a shipwreck where the survivors, in an open boat, joined in a cry, and attracted the notice of a vessel that was going to pass them. We might join in a cry."

MILLER: "Oh, it's all very well joking, Mrs. Curwen—"

MRS. CURWEN: "You call it joking!"

MILLER: "But it's not so amusing, being cooped up here indefinitely. I don't know how we're to get out. We can't join in a cry, and rouse the whole house. It would be ridiculous."

MRS. CURWEN: "And our present attitude is so eminently dignified! Well, I suppose we shall have to cast lots pretty soon to see which of us shall be sacrificed to nourish the survivors. It's long past dinner-time."

MISS LAWTON, breaking down: "Oh, *don't* say such terrible things."

YOUNG MR. BEMIS, indignantly comforting her: "Don't, don't cry. There's no danger. It's perfectly safe."

MILLER to the ELEVATOR BOY: "Couldn't you climb up the cable, and get on to the landing, and—ah!—get somebody?"

THE ELEVATOR BOY: "I could, maybe, if there was a hole in the roof."

MILLER, glancing up: "Ah! true."

MRS. CRASHAW, with an old lady's serious kindness: "My boy, can't you think of anything to do for us?"

THE ELEVATOR BOY yielding to the touch of humanity, and bursting into tears: "No, ma'am, I can't. And everybody's blamin'

me, as if I done it. What's my poor mother goin' to do?"

MRS. CRASHAW, soothingly: "But you said the runs in the cogs—"

THE ELEVATOR BOY: "How can I tell! That's what they say. They hain't never been tried."

MRS. CURWEN, springing to her feet: "There! I knew I should. Oh—" She sinks fainting to the floor.

MRS. CRASHAW, abandoning MISS LAWTON to the ministrations of young MR. BEMIS, while she kneels beside MRS. CURWEN and chafes her hand: "Oh, poor thing! I knew she was overwrought by the way she was keeping up. Give her air, Mr. Miller. Open a— Oh, there isn't any window."

MILLER, dropping on his knees, and fanning MRS. CURWEN: "There! there! Wake up, Mrs. Curwen. I didn't mean to scold you for joking. I didn't, indeed. I—I—I don't know what the deuce I'm up to." He gathers MRS. CURWEN'S inanimate form in his arms, and fans her face where it lies on his shoulder. "I don't know what my wife would say if—"

MRS. CRASHAW: "She would say that you were doing your duty."

MILLER, a little consoled: "Oh, do you think so? Well, perhaps."

YOUNG MR. BEMIS: "Do you feel faint at all, Miss Lawton?"

MISS LAWTON: "No, I think not. No, not if you say it's safe."

YOUNG MR. BEMIS: "Oh, I'm sure it is!"

MISS LAWTON, renewing her hold upon his hand: "Well, then! Perhaps I hurt you?"

YOUNG MR. BEMIS: "No, no! You couldn't."

MISS LAWTON: "How kind you are!"

MRS. CURWEN, opening her eyes: "Where—"

MILLER, rapidly transferring her to MRS. CRASHAW: "Still in the elevator Mrs. Curwen." Rising to his feet. "Something must be done. Perhaps we *had* better unite in a cry. It's ridiculous, of course. But it's the only thing we can do. Now, then! Hello!"

MISS LAWTON: "Papa!"

MRS. CRASHAW: "Agne-e-e-s!"

MRS. CURWEN, faintly: "Walter!"

THE ELEVATOR BOY: "Say!"

MILLER: "Oh, that won't do. All join in 'Hello!'"

ALL: "Hello!"

MILLER: "Once more!"

ALL: "Hello!"

MILLER: "*Once* more!"

ALL: "Hello!"

MILLER: "Now wait a while." After an interval: "No, nobody coming." He takes out his watch. "We must repeat this cry at intervals of a half-minute. Now, then!" They all join in the cry, repeating it as MR. MILLER makes the signal with his lifted hand.

MISS LAWTON: "Oh, it's no use!"

MRS. CRASHAW: "They don't hear."

MRS. CURWEN: "They *won't* hear."

MILLER: "Now, then, three times!"

ALL: "Hello! Hello! Hello!"

III

ROBERTS appears at the outer door of his apartment on the fifth floor. It opens upon a spacious landing, to which a wide staircase ascends at one side. At the other is seen the grated door to the shaft of the elevator. He peers about on all sides, and listens for a moment before he speaks.

ROBERTS: "Hello yourself."

MILLER, invisibly from the shaft: "Is that you, Roberts?"

ROBERTS: "Yes; where in the world are you?"

MILLER: "In the elevator."

MRS. CRASHAW: "We're *all* here, Edward."

ROBERTS: "What! You, Aunt Mary!"

MRS. CRASHAW: "Yes. Didn't I say so?"

ROBERTS: "Why don't you come up?"

MILLER: "We can't. The elevator has got stuck somehow."

ROBERTS: "Got stuck? Bless my soul! How did it happen? How long have you been there?"

MRS. CURWEN: "Since the world began!"

MILLER: "What's the use asking how it happened? We don't know, and we don't care. What we want to do is to get out."

ROBERTS: "Yes, yes! Be careful!" He rises from his frog-like posture at the grating, and walks the landing in agitation. "Just hold on a minute!"

MILLER: "Oh, *we* shan't stir."

ROBERTS: "I'll see what can be done."

MILLER: "Well, see quick, please. We have plenty of time, but we don't want to lose any. Don't alarm Mrs. Miller, if you can help it."

ROBERTS : "No, no."

MRS. CURWEN : "You *may* alarm Mr. Curwen."

ROBERTS : "What ! Are *you* there ?"

MRS. CURWEN : "Here ? I've been here all my life !"

ROBERTS : "Ha ! ha ! ha ! That's right. We'll soon have you out. Keep up your spirits."

MRS. CURWEN : "But I'm *not* keeping them up."

MISS LAWTON : "Tell papa I'm here too."

ROBERTS : "What ! You too, Miss Lawton ?"

MRS. CRASHAW : "Yes, and young Mr. Bemis. Didn't I *tell* you we were all here ?"

ROBERTS : "I couldn't realise it. Well, wait a moment."

MRS. CURWEN : "Oh, you can trust us to wait."

ROBERTS, returning with DR. LAWTON, and MR. BEMIS, who join him in stooping around the grated door of the shaft : "They're just under here in the well of the elevator, midway between the two stories."

LAWTON : "Ha ! ha ! ha ! You don't say so."

BEMIS : " Bless my heart ! What are they doing there ? "

MILLER : " We 're not doing anything. "

MRS. CURWEN : " We 're waiting for you to do something. "

MISS LAWTON : " Oh, papa ! "

LAWTON : " Don't be troubled, Lou, we 'll soon have you out. "

YOUNG MR. BEMIS : " Don't be alarmed, sir. Miss Lawton is all right. "

MISS LAWTON : " Yes, I 'm not frightened, papa. "

LAWTON : " Well, that 's a great thing in cases of this kind. How did you happen to get there ? "

MILLER, indignantly : " How do you suppose ? We came up in the elevator. "

LAWTON : " Well, why didn't you come the rest of the way ? "

MILLER : " The elevator wouldn't. "

LAWTON : " What seems to be the matter ? "

MILLER : " We don't know. "

LAWTON : " Have you tried to start it ? "

MILLER " Well, I 'll leave that to your imagination. "

LAWTON : " Well, be careful what you do. You might— "

MILLER, interrupting : " Roberts, who 's that talking ? "

ROBERTS, coming forward politely: "Oh, excuse me! I forgot that you didn't know each other. Dr. Lawton, Mr. Miller." Introducing them.

LAWTON: "Glad to know you."

MILLER: "Very happy to make your acquaintance, and hope some day to see you. And now, if you have completed your diagnosis—"

MRS. CURWEN: "None of us have ever had it before, doctor; nor any of our families, so far as we know."

LAWTON: "Ha! ha! ha! Very good! Well, just keep quiet. We'll have you all out of there presently."

BEMIS: "Yes, remain perfectly still."

ROBERTS: "Yes, we'll have you out. Just wait."

MILLER: "You seem to think we're going to run away. Why shouldn't we keep quiet? Do you suppose we're going to be very boisterous, shut up here like rats in a trap?"

MRS. CURWEN: "Or birds in a cage, if you want a more pleasing image."

MRS. CRASHAW: "How are you going to get us out, Edward?"

ROBERTS: "We don't know yet. But keep quiet—"

MILLER: "Keep quiet! Great heavens! we're afraid to stir a finger. Now don't say 'keep quiet' any more, for we can't stand it."

LAWTON: "He's in open rebellion. What are you going to do, Roberts?"

ROBERTS, rising and scratching his head: "Well, I don't know yet. We might break a hole in the roof."

LAWTON: "Ah, I don't think that would do. Besides you'd have to get a carpenter."

ROBERTS: "That's true. And it would make a racket, and alarm the house"—staring desperately at the grated doorway of the shaft. "If I could only find an elevator man—an elevator builder! But of course they all live in the suburbs, and they're keeping Christmas, and it would take too long, anyway."

BEMIS: "Hadn't you better send for the police? It seems to me it's a case for the authorities."

LAWTON: "Ah, there speaks the Europeanised mind! They always leave the initiative to the authorities. Go out and sound the fire alarm, Roberts. It's a case for the Fire Department."

ROBERTS: "Oh, it's all very well to joke,

Dr. Lawton. Why don't you prescribe something?"

LAWTON: "Surgical treatment seems to be indicated, and I'm merely a general practitioner."

ROBERTS: "If Willis were only here, he'd find some way out of it. Well, I'll have to go for help somewhere—"

MRS. ROBERTS and MRS. MILLER, bursting upon the scene: "Oh, what is it?"

LAWTON: "Ah, you needn't go for help, my dear fellow. It's come!"

MRS. ROBERTS: "What are you all doing here, Edward?"

MRS. MILLER: "Oh, have you had any bad news of Mr. Miller?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Or Aunt Mary?"

MILLER, calling up: "Well, are you going to keep us here all night? Why don't you do something?"

MRS. MILLER: "Oh, what's that? Oh, it's Mr. Miller! Oh, where are you, Ellery?"

MILLER: "In the elevator."

MRS. MILLER: "Oh! and where is the elevator? Why don't you get out? Oh"—

MILLER: "It's caught, and we can't."

MRS. MILLER: "Caught? Oh, then you will be killed—killed—killed! And

all my fault, sending you back after my fan, and I had it all the time in my own pocket; and it comes from my habit of giving it to you to carry in your overcoat pocket, because it's deep, and the fan can't break. And of course I never thought of my own pocket, and I never *should* have thought of it at all if Mr. Curwen hadn't been going back to get Mrs. Curwen's glove, for he'd brought another right after she'd sent him for a left, and we were all having such a laugh about it, and I just happened to put my hand on my pocket, and there I felt the fan. And oh, *what* shall I do?" Mrs. Miller utters these explanations and self-reproaches in a lamentable voice, while crouching close to the grated door to the elevator shaft, and clinging to its meshes.

MILLER: "Well, well, it's all right. I've got you another fan, here. Don't be frightened."

MRS. ROBERTS, wildly: "Where's Aunt Mary, Edward? Has Willis got back?" At a guilty look from her husband: "Edward! *don't* tell me that *she's* in that elevator! Don't do it, Edward! For your own sake don't. Don't tell me that your own child's mother's aunt is down

there, suspended between heaven and earth like—like—”

LAWTON: “The coffin of the Prophet.”

MRS. ROBERTS: “Yes. *Don't* tell me, Edward! Spare your child's mother, if you won't spare your wife!”

MRS. CRASHAW: “Agnes! don't be ridiculous. I'm here, and I never was more comfortable in my life.”

MRS. ROBERTS, calling down the grating: “Oh! Is it you, Aunt Mary?”

MRS. CRASHAW: “Of course it is!”

MRS. ROBERTS: “You recognise my voice?”

MRS. CRASHAW: “I should hope so, indeed! Why shouldn't I?”

MRS. ROBERTS: “And you know me? Agnes? Oh!”

MRS. CRASHAW: “Don't be a goose, Agnes.”

MRS. ROBERTS: “Oh, it *is* you aunty. It *is*! Oh, I'm so glad! I'm so happy! But keep perfectly still, aunty dear, and we'll soon have you out. Think of baby, and don't give way.”

MRS. CRASHAW: “I shall not, if the elevator doesn't, you may depend upon that.”

MRS. ROBERTS: “Oh, what courage you

do have! But keep up your spirits! Mrs. Miller and I have just come from seeing baby. She's gone to sleep with all her little presents in her arms. The children did want to see you so much before they went to bed. But never mind that now, Aunt Mary. I'm only too thankful to have you at all!"

MRS. CRASHAW: "I wish you did have me! And if you will all stop talking and try some of you to do something, I shall be greatly obliged to you. It's worse than it was in the sleeping car that night."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, do you remember it, Aunt Mary! Oh, how funny you are!" Turning heroically to her husband: "Now, Edward, dear, get them out. If it's necessary, get them out over my dead body. Anything! Only hurry. I will be calm; I will be patient. But you must act instantly. Oh, here comes Mr. Curwen!"

MR. CURWEN mounts the stairs to the landing with every sign of exhaustion, as if he had made a very quick run to and from his house. "Oh, *he* will help—I know he will! Oh, Mr. Curwen, the elevator is caught just below here with my aunt in it and Mrs. Miller's husband—"

LAWTON: "And my girl."

BEMIS : "And my boy."

MRS. CURWEN, calling up : "And your wife !"

CURWEN, horror-struck : "And my wife ! Oh, heavenly powers ! what are we going to do ? How shall we get them out ? Why don't they come up ?"

ALL : "They can't."

CURWEN : "Can't ? Oh, my goodness !" He flies at the grating, and kicks and beats it.

ROBERTS : "Hold on ! What's the use of that ?"

LAWTON : "You couldn't get at them if you beat the door down."

BEMIS : "Certainly not." They lay hands upon him and restrain him.

CURWEN, struggling : "Let me speak to my wife ! Will you prevent a husband from speaking to his own wife ?"

MRS. MILLER, in blind admiration of his frenzy : "Yes, that's just what I said. If some one had beaten the door in at once—"

MRS. ROBERTS : "Oh, Edward, dear, let him speak to his wife." Tearfully : "Think if I were there !"

ROBERTS, releasing him : "He may speak to his wife all night. But he mustn't knock the house down."

CURWEN, rushing at the grating: "Caroline! Can you hear me? Are you safe?"

MRS. CURWEN: "Perfectly. I had a little faint when we first stuck—"

CURWEN: "Faint? Oh!"

MRS. CURWEN: "But I am all right now."

CURWEN: "Well, that's right. Don't be frightened! There's no occasion for excitement. Keep perfectly calm and collected. It's the only way— What's that ringing?" The sound of an electric bell is heard within the elevator. It increases in fury.

MRS. ROBERTS and MRS. MILLER: "Oh, isn't it dreadful?"

THE ELEVATOR BOY: "It's somebody on the ground-floor callin' the elevator!"

CURWEN: "Well, never mind him. Don't pay the slightest attention to him. Let him go to the deuce! And, Caroline!"

MRS. CURWEN: "Yes?"

CURWEN: "I—I—I've got your glove all right."

MRS. CURWEN: "Left, you mean, I hope?"

CURWEN: "Yes, left, dearest! I *mean* left."

MRS. CURWEN: "Eight-button?"

CURWEN : "Yes."

MRS. CURWEN : "Light drab?"

CURWEN, pulling a light yellow glove from his pocket : "Oh!" He staggers away from the grating and stays himself against the wall, the mistaken glove dangling limply from his hand.

ROBERTS, LAWTON, and BEMIS : "Ah ! ha ! ha ! ha !"

MRS. ROBERTS : "Oh, for shame ! to laugh at such a time !"

MRS. MILLER : "When it's a question of life and death. There ! The ringing's stopped. What's that?" Steps are heard mounting the stairway rapidly, several treads at a time. MR. CAMPBELL suddenly bursts into the group on the landing with a final bound from the stairway. "Oh!"

CAMPBELL : "I can't find Aunt Mary, Agnes. I can't find anything—not even the elevator. Where's the elevator? I rang for it down there till I was black in the face."

MRS. ROBERTS : "No wonder ! It's here."

MRS. MILLER : "Between this floor and the floor below. With my husband in it."

CURWEN : "And my wife !"

LAWTON : " And my daughter ! "

BEMIS : " And my son ! "

MRS. ROBERTS : " And aunty ! "

ALL : " And it's stuck fast. "

ROBERTS : " And the long and short of it is, Willis, that we don't know how to get them out, and we wish you would suggest some way. "

LAWTON : " There's been a great tacit confidence among us in your executive ability and your inventive genius. "

MRS. ROBERTS : " Oh yes, we know you can do it. "

MRS. MILLER : " If you can't, nothing can save them. "

CAMPBELL, going to the grating :
" Miller ! "

MILLER : " Well ? "

CAMPBELL : " Start her up ! "

MILLER : " Now, look here, Campbell, we are not going to stand that ; we've had enough of it. I speak for the whole elevator. Don't you suppose that if it had been possible to start her up we— "

MRS. CURWEN : " We shouldn't have been at the moon by this time. "

CAMPBELL : " Well, then, start her *down* ! "

MILLER : " I never thought of that. " To
the ELEVATOR BOY : " Start her down. " To

the people on the landing above : " Hurrah ! She's off ! "

CAMPBELL : " Well, *now* start her up ! "

A JOINT CRY FROM THE ELEVATOR : " Thank you ! we'll *walk* up this time. "

MILLER : " Here ! let us out at this landing ! " They are heard precipitately emerging, with sighs and groans of relief, on the floor below.

MRS. ROBERTS, devoutly : " O Willis, it seems like an interposition of Providence, your coming just at this moment. "

CAMPBELL : " Interposition of common sense ! These hydraulic elevators weaken sometimes, and can't go any farther. "

ROBERTS, to the shipwrecked guests, who arrive at the top of the stairs, crestfallen, spent, and clinging to one another for support : " Why didn't you think of starting her down, some of you ? "

MRS. ROBERTS, welcoming them with kisses and hand-shakes : " I should have thought it would occur to you at once. "

MILLER, goaded to exasperation : " Did it occur to any of *you* ? "

LAWTON, with sublime impudence : " It occurred to *all* of us. But we naturally supposed you had tried it. "

MRS. MILLER, taking possession of her

husband: "Oh, what a fright you have given us!"

MILLER: "*I* given you! Do you suppose I did it out of a joke, or voluntarily?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Aunty, I don't know what to say to you. *You* ought to have been here long ago, before anything happened."

MRS. CRASHAW: "Oh, I can explain everything in due season. What I wish you to do now is to let me get at Willis, and kiss him." As CAMPBELL submits to her embrace: "You dear, good fellow! If it hadn't been for your presence of mind, I don't know how we should ever have got out of that horrid pen."

MRS. CURWEN, giving him her hand: "As it isn't proper for *me* to kiss you—"

CAMPBELL: "Well, I don't know. I don't wish to be *too* modest."

MRS. CURWEN: "I think I shall have to vote you a service of plate."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Come and look at the pattern of mine. And, Willis, as you are the true hero of the occasion, you shall take me in to dinner. And I am not going to let anybody go before you." She seizes his arm, and leads the way from the landing into the apartment. ROBERTS, LAWTON, and BEMIS follow stragglingly.

MRS. MILLER, getting her husband to one side : " When she fainted, she fainted *at* you, of course ! What did you do ? "

MILLER : " Who ? I ! Oh ! " After a moment's reflection : " She came to ! "

CURWEN, getting his wife aside : " When you fainted, Caroline, who revived you ? "

MRS. CURWEN : " Who ? *Me* ? Oh ! How should I know ? I was insensible. " They wheel arm in arm, and meet MR. and MRS. MILLER in the middle. MRS. CURWEN yields precedence with an ironical courtesy : " After you, Mrs. Miller ! "

MRS. MILLER, in a nervous, inimical twitter : " Oh, before the heroine of the lost elevator ? "

MRS. CURWEN, dropping her husband's arm, and taking MRS. MILLER'S : " Let us split the difference. "

MRS. MILLER : " Delightful ! I shall never forget the honour. "

MRS. CURWEN : " Oh, don't speak of honours ! Mr. Miller was *so* kind through all those terrible scenes in the elevator. "

MRS. MILLER : " I've no doubt you showed yourself duly grateful. " They pass in, followed by their husbands.

YOUNG MR. BEMIS, timidly : " Miss Lawton, in the elevator you asked me not

to leave you. Did you—ah—mean—I *must* ask you; it may be my only chance; if you meant—never?”

MISS LAWTON, dropping her head: “I—I—don’t—know.”

YOUNG MR. BEMIS: “But if I *wished* never to leave you, should you send me away?”

MISS LAWTON, with a shy, sly upward glance at him: “Not in the elevator!”

YOUNG MR. BEMIS: “Oh!”

MRS. ROBERTS, re-appearing at the door: “Why, you good-for-nothing young things, why don’t you come to— Oh! excuse me!” She re-enters precipitately followed by her tardy guests, on whom she casts a backward glance of sympathy. “Oh, you *needn’t* hurry!”

THE GAROTTERS

PART FIRST

I

MRS. ROBERTS ; THEN MR. ROBERTS

AT the window of her apartment in Hotel Bellingham, MRS. ROBERTS stands looking out into the early nightfall. A heavy snow is driving without, and from time to time the rush of the wind and the sweep of the flakes against the panes are heard. At the sound of hurried steps in the anteroom, MRS. ROBERTS turns from the window, and runs to the *portière*, through which she puts her head.

MRS. ROBERTS : "Is that you, Edward ? So dark here ! We ought really to keep the gas turned up all the time"

MR. ROBERTS, in a muffled voice, from without : "Yes, it's I."

MRS. ROBERTS : "Well, hurry in to the

fire, do! Ugh, what a storm! Do you suppose anybody will come? You must be half frozen, you poor thing! Come quick, or you'll certainly perish!" She flies from the *portière* to the fire burning on the hearth, pokes it, flings on a log, jumps back, brushes from her dress with a light shriek the sparks driven out upon it, and continues talking incessantly in a voice lifted for her husband to hear in the anteroom. "If I'd dreamed it was any such storm as this, I should never have let you go out in it in the world. It wasn't at all necessary to have the flowers. I could have got on perfectly well, and I believe *now* the table would look better without them. The chrysanthemums would have been quite enough; and I know you've taken more cold. I could tell it by your voice as soon as you spoke; and just as quick as they're gone to-night I'm going to have you bathe your feet in mustard and hot water, and take eight of aconite, and go straight to bed. And I don't want you to eat very much at dinner, dear, and you must be sure not to drink any coffee, or the aconite won't be of the least use." She turns and encounters her husband, who enters through the *portière*, his face pale, his eyes wild, his white necktie

pulled out of knot, and his shirt front rumpled. "Why, Edward, what in the world is the matter? What has happened?"

ROBERTS, sinking into a chair: "Get me a glass of water, Agnes—wine—whisky—brandy—"

MRS. ROBERTS, bustling wildly about: "Yes, yes. But what——Bella! Bridget! Maggy!—Oh, I'll go for it myself, and I *won't* stop to listen! Only—only don't die!" While ROBERTS remains with his eyes shut, and his head sunk on his breast in token of extreme exhaustion, she disappears and reappears through the door leading to her chamber, and then through the *portière* cutting off the dining-room. She finally descends upon her husband with a flagon of cologne in one hand, a small decanter of brandy in the other, and a wine-glass held in the hollow of her arm against her breast. She contrives to set the glass down on the mantel and fill it from the flagon, then she turns with the decanter in her hand, and while she presses the glass to her husband's lips, begins to pour the brandy on his head. "Here! this will revive you, and it'll refresh you to have this cologne on your head."

ROBERTS, rejecting a mouthful of the cologne with a furious sputter, and springing to his feet: "Why, you've given me the cologne to *drink*, Agnes! What are you about? Do you want to poison me? Isn't it enough to be robbed at six o'clock on the Common, without having your head soaked in brandy, and your whole system scented up like a barber's shop, when you get home?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Robbed?" She drops the wineglass, puts the decanter down on the hearth, and carefully bestowing the flagon of cologne in the wood-box, abandons herself to justice: "Then let them come for me at once Edward! If I could have the heart to send you out in such a night as this for a few wretched rosebuds, I'm quite equal to poisoning you. Oh, Edward, *who* robbed you?"

ROBERTS: "That's what I don't know." He continues to wipe his head with his handkerchief, and to sputter a little from time to time. "All I know is that when I got—phew!—to that dark spot by the Frog Pond, just by—phew!—that little group of—phew!—evergreens, you know—phew!—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Yes, yes; go on! I can bear it, Edward."

ROBERTS: "—a man brushed heavily against me, and then hurried on in the other direction. I had unbuttoned my coat to look at my watch under the lamp-post, and after he struck against me I clapped my hand to my waistcoat, and—pew!—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Waistcoat! Yes!"

ROBERTS: "—found my watch gone."

MRS. ROBERTS: "What! Your watch? The watch Willis gave you? Made out of the gold that he mined himself when he first went out to California? Don't ask me to believe it, Edward! But I'm only too glad that you escaped with your life. Let them have the watch and welcome. Oh, my dear, dear husband!" She approaches him with extended arms, and then suddenly arrests herself. "But you've got it on!"

ROBERTS, with as much returning dignity as can comport with his dishevelled appearance: "Yes; I took it from him." At his wife's speechless astonishment: "I went after him and took it from him." He sits down, and continues with resolute calm, while his wife remains standing before him motionless: "Agnes, I don't know how I came to do it. I wouldn't have believed I

could do it. I've never thought that I had much courage—physical courage; but when I felt my watch was gone, a sort of frenzy came over me. I wasn't hurt; and for the first time in my life I realised what an abominable outrage theft was. The thought that at six o'clock in the evening, in the very heart of a great city like Boston, an inoffensive citizen could be assaulted and robbed, made me furious. I didn't call out. I simply buttoned my coat tight round me and turned and ran after the fellow."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Edward!"

ROBERTS: "Yes, I did. He hadn't got half a dozen rods away—it all took place in a flash—and I could easily run him down. He was considerably larger than I—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh!"

ROBERTS: "—and he looked young and very athletic; but these things didn't seem to make any impression on me."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, I wonder that you live to tell the tale, Edward!"

ROBERTS: "Well, I wonder a little at myself. I don't set up for a great deal of—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "But I always knew you

had it! Go on. Oh, when I tell Willis of this! Had the robber any accomplices? Were there many of them?"

ROBERTS: "I only saw one. And I saw that my only chance was to take him at a disadvantage. I sprang upon him, and pulled him over on his back. I merely said, 'I'll trouble you for that watch of mine, if you please,' jerked open his coat, snatched the watch from his pocket—I broke the chain, I see—and then left him and ran again. He didn't make the slightest resistance nor utter a word. Of course it wouldn't do for him to make any noise about it, and I dare say he was glad to get off so easily." With affected nonchalance: "I'm pretty badly rumpled, I see. He fell against me, and a scuffle like that doesn't improve one's appearance."

MRS. ROBERTS, very solemnly: "Edward! I don't know what to say! Of course it makes my blood run cold to realise what you have been through, and to think what might have happened; but I think you behaved splendidly. Why, I never heard of such perfect heroism! You needn't tell *me* that he made no resistance. There was a deadly struggle — your necktie and everything about you shows it. And

you needn't think there was only one of them—"

ROBERTS, modestly: "I don't believe there was more."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Nonsense! There are *always* two! I've read the accounts of those garottings. And to think you not only got out of their clutches alive, but got your property back—Willis's watch! Oh, what *will* Willis say? But I know how proud of you he'll be. Oh, I wish I could scream it from the housetops. Why didn't you call the police?"

ROBERTS: "I didn't think—I hadn't time to think."

MRS. ROBERTS: "No matter. I'm glad you have *all* the glory of it. I don't believe you half realise what you've been through now. And perhaps this was the robbers' first attempt, and it will be a lesson to them. Oh yes! I'm glad you let them escape, Edward. They may have families. If every one behaved as you've done, there would soon be an end of garotting. But, oh! I can't bear to think of the danger you've run. And I want you to promise me never, never to undertake such a thing again!"

ROBERTS: "Well, I don't know—"

MRS. ROBERTS : " Yes, yes ; you must ! Suppose you had got killed in that awful struggle with those reckless wretches tugging to get away from you ! Think of the children ! Why, you might have burst a blood-vessel ! Will you promise, Edward ? Promise this instant, on your bended knees, just as if you were in a court of justice ! " MRS. ROBERTS'S excitement mounts, and she flings herself at her husband's feet, and pulls his face down to hers with the arm she has thrown about his neck. " Will you promise ? "

II

MRS. CRASHAW ; MR. AND MRS. ROBERTS

MRS. CRASHAW, entering unobserved : " Promise you what, Agnes ? The man doesn't smoke *now*. What more can you ask ? " She starts back from the spectacle of Roberts's disordered dress. " Why, what's happened to you, Edward ? "

MRS. ROBERTS, springing to her feet : " Oh, you may well ask that, Aunt Mary ! Happened ? You ought to fall down and worship him ! And you *will* when you know what he's been through. He's been robbed ! "

MRS. CRASHAW : “Robbed ? What nonsense ! Who robbed him ? *Where* was he robbed ?”

MRS. ROBERTS : “He was attacked by two garotters—”

ROBERTS : “No, no—”

MRS. ROBERTS : “Don’t speak, Edward ! I *know* there were two. On the Common. Not half an hour ago. As he was going to get me some rosebuds. In the midst of this terrible storm.”

MRS. CRASHAW : “Is this true, Edward ?”

MRS. ROBERTS : “Don’t answer, Edward ! One of the band threw his arm round Edward’s neck—so.” She illustrates by garotting MRS. CRASHAW, who disengages herself with difficulty.

MRS. CRASHAW : “Mercy, child ! What *are* you doing to my lace ?”

MRS. ROBERTS : “And the other one snatched his watch, and ran as fast as he could.”

MRS. CRASHAW : “Willis’s watch ? Why, he’s got it on.”

MRS. ROBERTS, with proud delight : “Exactly what I said when he told me.” Then, very solemnly : “And do you know *why* he’s got it on ?—’Sh, Edward ! I *will*

tell ! Because he ran after them and took it back again."

MRS. CRASHAW : " Why, they might have killed him ! "

MRS. ROBERTS : " Of *course* they might. But *Edward* didn't care. The idea of being robbed at six o'clock on the Common made him so furious that he scorned to cry out for help, or call the police, or anything ; but he just ran after them—"

ROBERTS : " Agnes ! Agnes ! There was only *one*."

MRS. ROBERTS : " Nonsense, Edward ! How could you tell, so excited as you were?—And caught hold of the largest of the wretches—a perfect young giant—"

ROBERTS : " No, no ; not a *giant*, my dear."

MRS. ROBERTS : " Well, he was *young*, anyway !—And flung him on the ground." She advances upon MRS. CRASHAW in her enthusiasm.

MRS. CRASHAW : " Don't you fling *me* on the ground, Agnes ! I won't have it."

MRS. ROBERTS : " And tore his coat open, while all the rest were tugging at him, and snatched his watch, and then—and then just walked coolly away."

ROBERTS : " No, my dear ; I ran as fast as I could."

MRS. ROBERTS : " Well, *ran*. It's quite the same thing, and I'm just as proud of you as if you had walked. Of course you were not going to throw your life away."

MRS. CRASHAW : " I think he did a very silly thing in going after them at all."

ROBERTS : " Why, of course, if I'd thought twice about it, I shouldn't have done it."

MRS. ROBERTS : " Of course you wouldn't, dear ! And that's what I want him to promise, Aunt Mary : never to do it again, no matter *how* much he's provoked. I want him to promise it right here in your presence, Aunt Mary !"

MRS. CRASHAW : " I think it's much more important he should put on another collar and—shirt, if he's going to see company."

MRS. ROBERTS : " Yes ; go right off at once, Edward. How you *do* think of things, Aunt Mary ! I really suppose I should have gone on all night and never noticed his looks. Run, Edward, and do it, dear. But—kiss me first ! Oh, it *don't* seem as if you could be alive and well after it all ! Are you sure you're not hurt ?"

ROBERTS, embracing her : " No ; I'm all right."

MRS. ROBERTS : “ And you’re not injured internally? Sometimes they’re injured internally—aren’t they, Aunt Mary?—and it doesn’t show till months afterwards. Are you sure?”

ROBERTS, making a cursory examination of his ribs with his hands : “ Yes, I think so.”

MRS. ROBERTS : “ And you don’t feel any bad effects from the cologne *now*? Just think, Aunt Mary, I gave him cologne to drink, and poured the brandy on his head, when he came in ! But I was determined to keep calm, whatever I did. And if I’ve poisoned him I’m quite willing to die for it—oh, quite ! I would gladly take the blame of it before the whole world.”

MRS. CRASHAW : “ Well, for pity’s sake, let the man go and make himself decent. There’s your bell now.”

MRS. ROBERTS : “ Yes, do go, Edward. But—kiss me—”

MRS. CRASHAW : “ He *did* kiss you, Agnes. Don’t be a simpleton !”

MRS. ROBERTS : “ Did he? Well, kiss me again, then, Edward. And now do go, dear. M-m-m-m.” The inarticulate endearments represented by these signs terminate in a wild embrace, protracted half-

way across the room, in the height of which MR. WILLIS CAMPBELL enters.

III

MR. CAMPBELL, MRS. CRASHAW, MR. AND
MRS. ROBERTS

WILLIS, pausing in contemplation :
“Hello ! What’s the matter ! What’s
she trying to get out of you, Roberts ?
Don’t you do it, anyway, old fellow.”

MRS. ROBERTS, in an ecstasy of satisfaction : “Willis ! Oh, you’ve come in time
to see him just as he is. Look at him,
Willis !” In the excess of her emotion she
twitches her husband about, and with his
arm fast in her clutch, presents him in the
disadvantageous effect of having just been
taken into custody. Under these circum-
stances ROBERTS’S attempt at an expression
of diffident heroism fails ; he looks sneaking,
he looks guilty, and his eyes fall under the
astonished regard of his brother-in-law.

WILLIS : “What’s the matter with him ?
What’s he been doing ?”

MRS. ROBERTS : “’Sh, Edward !—What’s
he been doing ? What does he look as if he
had been doing ?”

MRS. CRASHAW : " Agnes—"

WILLIS : " He looks as if he had been signing the pledge. And he—smells like it."

MRS. ROBERTS : " For shame, Willis ! I should think you 'd sink through the floor ! Edward, not a word ! I *am* ashamed of him, if he *is* my brother."

WILLIS : " Why, what in the world 's up, Agnes ?"

MRS. ROBERTS : " Up ? He's been *robbed* !—robbed on the Common, not five minutes ago ! A whole gang of garotters surrounded him under the Old Elm—or just where it used to be—and took his watch away ! And he ran after them, and knocked the largest of the gang down, and took it back again. He wasn't hurt, but we're afraid he's been injured internally ; he may be bleeding internally *now*— Oh, do you think he is, Willis ? Don't you think we ought to send for a physician ?—That, and the cologne I gave him to drink. It's the brandy I poured on his head makes him smell so. And he all so exhausted he couldn't speak, and I didn't know what I was doing, either ; but he's promised—oh yes, he's promised !—never, never to do it again." She again flings her arms about her husband, and then turns proudly to her brother.

WILLIS: "Do you know what it means, Aunt Mary?"

MRS. CRASHAW: "Not in the least! But I've no doubt that Edward can explain, after he's changed his linen—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh yes, do go, Edward! Not but what I should be proud and happy to have you appear just as you are before the whole world, if it was only to put Willis down with his jokes about your absent-mindedness, and his boasts about those California desperadoes of his."

ROBERTS: "Come, come, Agnes! I *must* protest against your—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, I know it doesn't become me to praise your courage, darling! But I should like to know what Willis would have done, with all his California experience, if a garotter had taken his watch?"

WILLIS: "I should have let him keep it, and pay five dollars a quarter himself for getting it cleaned and spoiled. Anybody but a literary man would. How many of them were there, Roberts?"

ROBERTS: "I only saw one."

MRS. ROBERTS: "But of course there were more. How could he tell, in the dark and excitement? And the one he did see

was a perfect giant; so you can imagine what the rest must have been like."

WILLIS: "Did you really knock him down?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Knock him down? Of course he did."

MRS. CRASHAW: "Agnes, *will* you hold your tongue, and let the men alone?"

MRS. ROBERTS, whimpering: "I can't, Aunt Mary. And you couldn't, if it was yours."

ROBERTS: "I pulled him over backwards."

MRS. ROBERTS: "There, Willis!"

WILLIS: "And grabbed your watch from him?"

ROBERTS: "I was in quite a frenzy; I really hardly knew what I was doing—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "And he didn't call for the police, or anything—"

WILLIS: "Ah, that showed presence of mind! He knew it wouldn't have been any use."

MRS. ROBERTS: "And when he had got his watch away from them, he just let them go, because they had families dependent on them."

WILLIS: "I should have let them go in the first place, but you behaved handsomely

in the end, Roberts; there's no denying that. And when you came in she gave you cologne to drink, and poured brandy on your head. It must have revived you. I should think it would wake the dead."

MRS. ROBERTS: "I was all excitement, Willis—"

WILLIS: "No, I should think from the fact that you had set the decanter on the hearth, and put your cologne into the wood-box, you were perfectly calm, Agnes." He takes them up and hands them to her. "Quite as calm as usual." The door-bell rings.

MRS. CRASHAW: "Willis, *will* you let that ridiculous man go away and make himself presentable before people begin to come?" The bell rings violently, peal upon peal.

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, my goodness what's that? It's the garotters—I know it is; and we shall all be murdered in our beds!"

MRS. CRASHAW: "What in the world can it—"

WILLIS: "Why don't your girl answer the bell, Agnes? Or I'll go myself." The bell rings violently again.

MRS. ROBERTS: "No, Willis, you shan't! Don't leave me, Edward! Aunt Mary!—"

Oh, if we *must* die, let us all die together !
Oh, my poor children ! Ugh ! What's that ?" The servant-maid opens the outer door, and uttering a shriek, rushes in through the drawing-room *portière*.

BELLA THE MAID : " Oh, my goodness ! Mrs. Roberts, it's Mr. Bemis ! "

MRS. ROBERTS : " Which Mr. Bemis ? "

ROBERTS : " What's the matter with him ? "

MRS. CRASHAW : " Why doesn't she show him in ? "

WILLIS : " Has *he* been garotting somebody too ? "

IV

MR. BEMIS, MR. CAMPBELL, MR. AND
MRS. ROBERTS

BEMIS, appearing through the *portière* ;
" I—I beg your pardon, Mrs. Roberts. I oughtn't to present myself in this state—I— But I thought I'd better stop on my way home and report, so that my son needn't be alarmed at my absence when he comes. I—" He stops, exhausted, and regards the others with a wild stare, while they stand taking note of his disordered coat, his

torn vest, and his tumbled hat. "I've just been robbed—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Robbed? Why, *Edward* has been robbed too."

BEMIS: "—coming through the Common—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Yes, *Edward* was coming through the Common."

BEMIS: "—of my watch—"

MRS. ROBERTS, in rapturous admiration of the coincidence: "Oh, and it was *Edward's watch* they took!"

WILLIS: "It's a parallel case, Agnes. Pour him out a glass of cologne to drink, and rub his head with brandy. And you might let him sit down and rest while you're enjoying the excitement."

MRS. ROBERTS, in a hospitable remorse: "Oh, what am I thinking of! Here, *Edward*—or no, you're too weak, you mustn't. Willis, *you* help me to help him to the sofa."

MRS. CRASHAW: "I think you'd better help him off with his overcoat and his arctics." To the maid: "Here, Bella, if you haven't quite taken leave of your wits, undo his shoes."

ROBERTS: "I'll help him off with his coat—"

BEMIS: "Careful! careful! I may be injured internally."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, if you only *were*, Mr. Bemis, perhaps I could persuade Edward that he was too: I *know* he is. Edward, don't exert yourself! Aunt Mary, will you *stop* him, or do you all wish to see me go distracted here before your eyes?"

WILLIS, examining the overcoat which ROBERTS has removed: "Well, you won't have much trouble buttoning and unbuttoning this coat for the present."

BEMIS: "They tore it open, and tore my watch from my vest pocket—"

WILLIS, looking at the vest: "I see. Pretty lively work. Were there many of them?"

BEMIS: "There must have been two at least—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "There were half a dozen in the gang that attacked Edward."

BEMIS: "One of them pulled me violently over on my back—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Edward's put *his* arm round his neck and choked him."

MRS. CRASHAW: "Agnes!"

MRS. ROBERTS: "I *know* he did, Aunt Mary."

BEMIS: "And the other tore my watch out of my pocket."

MRS. ROBERTS: "*Edward's*—"

MRS. CRASHAW: "Agnes, I'm thoroughly ashamed of you. *Will* you stop interrupting?"

BEMIS: "And left me lying in the snow."

MRS. ROBERTS: "And then he ran after them, and snatched his watch away again in spite of them all; and he didn't call for the police, or anything, because it was their first offence, and he couldn't bear to think of their suffering families."

BEMIS, with a stare of profound astonishment: "Who?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Edward. Didn't I *say* Edward, all the time?"

BEMIS: "I thought you meant me. I didn't think of pursuing them; but you may be very sure that if there had been a policeman within call—of course there wasn't one within cannon-shot—I should have handed the scoundrels over without the slightest remorse."

ROBERTS: "Oh!" He sinks into a chair with a slight groan.

WILLIS: "What is it?"

ROBERTS: "'Sh! Don't say anything. But—stay here. I want to speak with you, Willis."

BEMIS, with mounting wrath : “ I should not have hesitated an instant to give the rascal in charge, no matter *who* was dependent upon him—no matter if he were my dearest friend, my own brother.”

ROBERTS, under his breath : “ Gracious powers ! ”

BEMIS : “ And while I am very sorry to disagree with Mr. Roberts, I can’t help feeling that he made a great mistake in allowing the ruffians to escape.”

MRS. CRASHAW, with severity : “ I think you are quite right, Mr. Bemis.”

BEMIS : “ Probably it was the same gang attacked us both. After escaping from Mr. Roberts they fell upon me.”

MRS. CRASHAW : “ I haven’t a doubt of it.”

ROBERTS, *sotto voce* to his brother-in-law : “ I think I’ll ask you to go with me to my room, Willis. Don’t alarm Agnes, please. I—I feel quite faint.”

MRS. ROBERTS, crestfallen : “ I can’t feel that Edward was to blame. Ed— Oh, I suppose he’s gone off to make himself presentable. But Willis— Where’s Willis, Aunt Mary ? ”

MRS. CRASHAW : “ Probably gone with him to help him.”

MRS. ROBERTS : "Oh, he *saw* how unstrung poor Edward was ! Mr. Bemis, I think you're quite prejudiced. How could Edward help their escaping ? I think it was quite enough for him, single-handed, to get his watch back." A ring at the door, and then a number of voices in the ante-room. "I do believe they're all there ! I'll just run out and prepare your son. He would be dreadfully shocked if he came right in upon you." She runs into the anteroom, and is heard without : "Oh, Dr. Lawton ! Oh, Lou, dear ! Oh, Mr. Bemis ! How can I ever tell you ? Your poor father ! No, no, I *can't* tell you ! You mustn't ask me ! It's too hideous ! And you wouldn't believe me if I did."

CHORUS OF ANGUISHED VOICES : "What ? what ? what ?"

MRS. ROBERTS : "They've been robbed ! Garotted on the Common ! And, *oh*, Dr. Lawton, I'm so glad *you've* come ! They're both injured internally, but I *wish* you'd look at Edward first."

BEMIS : "Good heavens ! Is that Mrs. Roberts's idea of preparing my son ? And his poor young wife !" He addresses his demand to MRS. CRASHAW, who lifts the hands of impotent despair.

PART SECOND

MR. ROBERTS ; MR. CAMPBELL

IN MR. ROBERTS'S dressing-room, that gentleman is discovered tragically confronting MR. WILLIS CAMPBELL, with a watch uplifted in either hand.

WILLIS : " Well ? "

ROBERTS, gasping : " My—my watch ! "

WILLIS : " Yes. How comes there to be two of it ? "

ROBERTS : " Don't you understand ? When I went out I—didn't take my watch—with me. I left it here on my bureau. "

WILLIS : " Well ? "

ROBERTS : " Oh, merciful heavens ! don't you see ? Then I couldn't have been robbed ! "

WILLIS : " Well, but whose watch did you take from the fellow that didn't rob you, then ? "

ROBERTS : " His own ! " He abandons himself powerlessly upon a chair. " Yes ; I left my own watch here, and when that person brushed against me in the Common, I missed it for the first time. I supposed

he had robbed me, and ran after him and—”

WILLIS : “Robbed *him* !”

ROBERTS : “Yes.”

WILLIS : “Ah, ha, ha, ha ! I, hi, hi, hi ! O, ho, ho, ho !” He yields to a series of these gusts and paroxysms, bowing up and down, and stamping to and fro, and finally sits down exhausted, and wipes the tears from his cheeks. “Really, this thing will kill me. What are you going to do about it, Roberts ?”

ROBERTS, with profound dejection and abysmal solemnity : “I don’t know, Willis. Don’t you see that it must have been—that I must have robbed—Mr. Bemis ?”

WILLIS : “Bemis !” After a moment for tasting the fact. “Why, so it was ! O Lord ! O Lord ! And was poor old Bemis that burly ruffian ? that bloodthirsty gang of giants ? that—that—O Lord ! O Lord !” He bows his head upon his chair-back in complete exhaustion, demanding, feebly, as he gets breath for the successive questions, “What are you going to d-o-o-o ! What shall you s-a-a-a-y ? How can you expla-a-ain it ?”

ROBERTS : “I can do nothing. I can say nothing. I can never explain it. I must

go to Mr. Bemis and make a clean breast of it; but think of the absurdity—the ridicule!”

WILLIS, after a thoughtful silence: “Oh, it isn’t *that* you’ve got to think of. You’ve got to think of the old gentleman’s sense of injury and outrage. Didn’t you hear what he said—that he would have handed over his dearest friend, his own brother, to the police?”

ROBERTS: “But that was in the supposition that his dearest friend, his own brother, had intentionally robbed him. You can’t imagine, Willis—”

WILLIS: “Oh, I can imagine a great many things. It’s all well enough for you to say that the robbery was a mistake; but it was a genuine case of garotting as far as the assault and taking the watch go. He’s a very pudgicky old gentleman.”

ROBERTS: “He is.”

WILLIS: “And I don’t see how you’re going to satisfy him that it was all a joke. Joke? It *wasn’t* a joke! It was a real assault and a *bona fide* robbery, and Bemis can prove it.”

ROBERTS: “But he would never insist—”

WILLIS: “Oh, I don’t know about that.

He's pretty queer, Bemis is. You can't say what an old gentleman like that will or won't do. If he should choose to carry it into court—"

ROBERTS: "Court!"

WILLIS: "—it might be embarrassing. And anyway, it would have a very strange look in the papers."

ROBERTS: "The papers! Good gracious!"

WILLIS: "Ten years from now a man that heard you mentioned would forget all about the acquittal, and say: 'ROBERTS? Oh yes! Wasn't he the one they sent to the House of Correction for garotting an old friend of his on the Common?' You see, it wouldn't do to go and make a clean breast of it to Bemis."

ROBERTS: "I see."

WILLIS: "What will you do?"

ROBERTS: "I must never say anything to him about it. Just let it go."

WILLIS: "And keep his watch? I don't see how you could manage that. What would you do with the watch? You might sell it, of course—"

ROBERTS: "Oh no, I *couldn't* do that."

WILLIS: "You might give it away to some deserving person; but if it got him into trouble—"

ROBERTS: "No, no; that wouldn't do either."

WILLIS: "And you can't have it lying around; Agnes would be sure to find it, sooner or later."

ROBERTS: "Yes."

WILLIS: "Besides, there's your conscience. Your conscience wouldn't *let* you keep Bemis's watch away from him. And if it would, what do you suppose Agnes's conscience would do when she came to find it out? Agnes hasn't got much of a head—the want of it seems to grow upon her; but she's got a conscience as big as the side of a house."

ROBERTS: "Oh, I see; I see."

WILLIS, coming up and standing over him, with his hands in his pockets: "I tell you what, Roberts, you're in a box."

ROBERTS, abjectly: "I know it, Willis; I know it. What do you suggest? You *must* know some way out of it."

WILLIS: "It isn't a simple matter like telling them to start the elevator down when they couldn't start her up. I've got to think it over." He walks to and fro, ROBERTS's eyes helplessly following his movements. How would it do to— No, that wouldn't do, either."

ROBERTS: "What wouldn't?"

WILLIS: "Nothing. I was just thinking— I say, you might— Or, no, you couldn't."

ROBERTS: "Couldn't what?"

WILLIS: "Nothing. But if you were to— No; up a stump that way too."

ROBERTS: "Which way? For mercy's sake, my dear fellow, don't seem to get a clue if you haven't it. It's more than I can bear." He rises, and desperately confronts WILLIS in his promenade. "If you see any hope at all—"

WILLIS, stopping: "Why, if you were a different sort of fellow, Roberts, the thing would be perfectly easy."

ROBERTS: "Very well, then. What sort of fellow do you want me to be? I'll be any sort of fellow you like."

WILLIS: "Oh, but you couldn't! With that face of yours, and that confounded conscience of yours behind it, you would give away the whitest lie that was ever told."

ROBERTS: "Do you wish me to lie? Very well, then, I will lie. What is the lie?"

WILLIS: "Ah, now you're talking like a man! I can soon think up a lie if you're

game for it. Suppose it wasn't so very white—say a delicate blonde!”

ROBERTS: “I shouldn't care if it were as black as the ace of spades.”

WILLIS: “Roberts, I honour you! It isn't everybody who could steal an old gentleman's watch, and then be so ready to lie out of it. Well, you *have* got courage—both kinds—moral and physical.”

ROBERTS: “Thank you, Willis. Of course I don't pretend that I should be willing to lie under ordinary circumstances; but for the sake of Agnes and the children — I don't want any awkwardness about the matter; it would be the death of me. Well, what do you wish me to say? Be quick; I don't believe I could hold out for a great while. I don't suppose but what Mr. Bemis would be reasonable, even if I—”

WILLIS: “I'm afraid we couldn't trust him. The only way is for you to take the bull by the horns.”

ROBERTS: “Yes?”

WILLIS: “You will not only have to lie, Roberts, but you will have to wear an air of innocent candour at the same time.”

ROBERTS: “I — I'm afraid I couldn't manage that. What is your idea?”

WILLIS: "Oh, just come into the room with a laugh when we go back, and say, in an offhand way, 'By the way, Agnes, Willis and I made a remarkable discovery in my dressing-room; we found my watch there on the bureau. Ha, ha, ha!' Do you think you could do it?"

ROBERTS: "I—I don't know."

WILLIS: "Try the laugh now."

ROBERTS: "I'd rather not—now."

WILLIS: "Well, try it, anyway."

ROBERTS: "Ha, ha, ha?"

WILLIS: "Once more."

ROBERTS: "Ha, ha, ha!"

WILLIS: "Pretty ghastly; but I guess you can come it."

ROBERTS: "I'll try. And then what?"

WILLIS: "And then you say, 'I hadn't put it on when I went out, and when I got after that fellow and took it back, I was simply getting somebody else's watch!' Then you hold out both watches to her, and laugh again. Everybody laughs, and crowds round you to examine the watches, and you make fun and crack jokes at your own expense all the time, and pretty soon old Bemis says, 'Why, this is *my* watch, *now!*' and you laugh more than ever—"

ROBERTS: "I'm afraid I couldn't laugh when he said that. I don't believe I could laugh. It would make my blood run cold."

WILLIS: "Oh no, it wouldn't. You'd be in the spirit of it by that time."

ROBERTS: "Do you think so? Well?"

WILLIS: "And then you say, 'Well, this is the most remarkable coincidence I ever heard of. I didn't get my own watch from the fellow, but I got yours, Mr. Bemis'; and then you hand it over to him and say, 'Sorry I had to break the chain in getting it from him,' and then everybody laughs again, and—and that ends it."

ROBERTS, with a profound sigh: "Do you think that would end it?"

WILLIS: "Why, certainly. It'll put old Bemis in the wrong, don't you see? It'll show that instead of letting the fellow escape to go and rob *him*, you attacked him and took Bemis's property back from him yourself. Bemis wouldn't have a word to say. All you've got to do is to keep up a light, confident manner."

ROBERTS: "But what if it shouldn't put Bemis in the wrong? What if he shouldn't say or do anything that we've

counted upon, but something altogether different?"

WILLIS: "Well, then, you must trust to inspiration, and adapt yourself to circumstances."

ROBERTS: "Wouldn't it be rather more of a joke to come out with the facts at once?"

WILLIS: "On you it would; and a year from now—say next Christmas—you could get the laugh on Bemis that way. But if you were to risk it now, there's no telling how he'd take it. He's so indignant he might insist upon leaving the house. But with this plan of mine—"

ROBERTS, in despair: "I couldn't, Willis. I don't feel light, and I don't feel confident, and I couldn't act it. If it were a simple lie—"

WILLIS: "Oh, lies are never simple; they require the exercise of all your ingenuity. If you want something simple, you must stick to the truth, and throw yourself on Bemis's mercy."

ROBERTS, walking up and down in great distress: "I can't do it; I can't do it. It's very kind of you to think it all out for me, but"—struck by a sudden idea—"Willis, why shouldn't *you* do it?"

WILLIS: "I?"

ROBERTS: "You are good at those things. You have so much *aplomb*, you know. You could carry it off, you know, first-rate."

WILLIS, as if finding a certain fascination in the idea: "Well, I don't know—"

ROBERTS: "And I could chime in on the laugh. I think I could do that if somebody else was doing the rest."

WILLIS, after a moment of silent reflection: "I *should* like to do it. I should like to see how old Bemis would look when I played it on him. Roberts, I *will* do it. Not a word! I should *like* to do it. Now you go on and hurry up your toilet, old fellow; you needn't mind me here. I'll be rehearsing."

MRS. ROBERTS, knocking at the door outside: "Edward, are you *never* coming?"

ROBERTS: "Yes, yes; I'll be there in a minute, my dear."

WILLIS: "Yes, he'll be there. Run along back, and keep it going till we come. Roberts I wouldn't take a thousand dollars for this chance."

ROBERTS: "I'm glad you like it."

WILLIS: "Like it? Of course I do. Or no! Hold on! Wait! It won't do! No; you must take the leading part, and I'll

support you, and I'll come in strong if you break down. That's the way we have got to work it. You must make the start."

ROBERTS: "Couldn't you make it better, Willis? It's your idea."

WILLIS: "No; they'd be sure to suspect me, and they can't suspect you of anything—you're so innocent. The illusion will be complete."

ROBERTS, very doubtfully: "Do you think so?"

WILLIS: "Yes. Hurry up. Let me unbutton that collar for you."

PART THIRD

I

MRS. ROBERTS, DR. LAWTON, MRS.
CRASHAW, MR. BEMIS, YOUNG MR.
AND MRS. BEMIS

MRS. ROBERTS, surrounded by her guests, and confronting from her sofa MR. BEMIS, who still remains sunken in his arm-chair, has apparently closed an exhaustive recital of the events which have ended in his

presence there. She looks round with a mixed air of self-denial and self-satisfaction to read the admiration of her listeners in their sympathetic countenances.

DR. LAWTON, with an ironical sigh of profound impression: "Well, Mrs. Roberts, you are certainly the most lavishly hospitable of hostesses. Every one knows what delightful dinners you give; but these little dramatic episodes which you offer your guests, by way of appetiser, are certainly unique. Last year an elevator stuck in the shaft with half the company in it, and this year a highway robbery, its daring punishment and its reckless repetition—what the newspapers will call 'A Triple Mystery' when it gets to them—and both victims among our commensals! Really, I don't know what more we could ask of you, unless it were the foot-padded footpad himself as a commensal. If this sort of thing should become *de rigueur* in society generally, I don't know what's to become of people who haven't your invention."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, it's all very well to make fun now, Dr. Lawton; but if you had been here when they first came in—"

YOUNG MRS. BEMIS: "Yes, indeed, I think so too, Mrs. Roberts. If Mr. Bemis—Alfred,

I mean—and papa hadn't been with me when you came out there to prepare us, I don't know what I should have done. I should certainly have died, or gone through the floor." She looks fondly up into the face of her husband for approval, where he stands behind her chair, and furtively gives him her hand for pressure.

YOUNG MR. BEMIS: "Somebody ought to write to the Curwens—Mrs. Curwen, that is—about it."

MRS. BEMIS, taking away her hand: "Oh yes, papa, *do* write!"

LAWTON: "I will, my dear. Even Mrs. Curwen, dazzling away in another sphere—hemisphere—and surrounded by cardinals and all the other celestial lights there at Rome, will be proud to exploit this new evidence of American enterprise. I can fancy the effects she will produce with it."

MRS. ROBERTS: "And the Millers—what a shame they couldn't come! How excited they would have been!—that is, Mrs. Miller. Is their baby very bad, Doctor?"

LAWTON: "Well, vaccination is always a very serious thing—with a first child. I should say, from the way Mrs. Miller feels about it, that Miller wouldn't be able to be out for a week to come yet."

MRS. ROBERTS : "Oh, how ridiculous you are, Doctor !"

BEMIS, rising feebly from his chair :
"Well, now that it's all explained, Mrs. Roberts, I think I'd better go home ; and if you'll kindly have them telephone for a carriage—"

MRS. ROBERTS : "No, indeed, Mr. Bemis ! We shall not let you go. Why, the *idea* ! You must stay and take dinner with us, just the same."

BEMIS : "But in this state—"

MRS. ROBERTS : "Oh, never mind the *state*. You look perfectly well ; and if you insist upon going, I shall know that you bear a grudge against Edward for not arresting him. Wait ! We can put you in perfect order in just a second." She flies out of the room, and then comes swooping back with a needle and thread, a fresh white necktie, a handkerchief, and a hair-brush. "There ! I can't let you go to Edward's dressing-room, because he's there himself, and the children are in mine, and we've had to put the new maid in the guest chamber—you *are* rather cramped in flats, that's true ; that's the worst of them—but if you don't mind having your toilet made in public, like the King of France—"

BEMIS, entering into the spirit of it : " Not the least ; but—" He laughs, and drops back into his chair.

MRS. ROBERTS, distributing the brush to young MR. BEMIS, and the tie to his wife, and dropping upon her knees before MR. BEMIS : " Now, Mrs. Lou, you just whip off that crumpled tie and whip on the fresh one, and, *Mister* Lou, you give his hair a touch, and I'll have this torn button-hole mended before you can think." She seizes it and begins to sew vigorously upon it.

MRS. CRASHAW : " Agnes, you are the most ridiculously sensible woman in the country."

LAWTON, standing before the group, with his arms folded and his feet well apart, in an attitude of easy admiration : " The Wounded Adonis, attended by the Loves and Graces. Familiar Pompeiian fresco."

MRS. ROBERTS, looking around at him : " I don't see a great many Loves."

LAWTON : " She ignores us, Mrs. Crashaw. And after what you've just said !"

MRS. ROBERTS : " Then why don't you do something ?"

LAWTON : " The Loves *never* do anything—in frescoes. They stand round and sympathise. Besides, we are waiting to

administer an anæsthetic. But what I admire in this subject even more than the activity of the Graces is the serene dignity of the Adonis. I have seen my old friend in many trying positions, but I never realised till now all the simpering absurdity, the flattered silliness, the senile coquettishness, of which his benign countenance was capable."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Don't mind him a bit, Mr. Bemis; it's nothing but—"

LAWTON: "Pure envy. I own it."

BEMIS: "All right, Lawton. Wait till—"

MRS. ROBERTS, making a final stitch, snapping off the thread, and springing to her feet, all in one: "There, have you finished, Mr. and Mrs. Lou? Well, then, take this lace handkerchief, and draw it down from his neck and pin it in his waistcoat, and you have—"

LAWTON, as MR. BEMIS rises to his feet: "A Gentleman of the Old School. Bemis, you look like a miniature of yourself by Malbone. Rather flattered, but—recognisable."

BEMIS, with perfectly recovered gaiety: "Go on, go on, Lawton. I can understand your envy. I can pity it."

LAWTON : "Could you forgive Roberts for not capturing the garotter?"

BEMIS : "Yes, I could. I could give the garotter his liberty, and present him with an admission to the Provident Woodyard, where he could earn an honest living for his family."

LAWTON, compassionately : "You *are* pretty far gone, Bemis. Really, I think somebody ought to go for Roberts."

MRS. ROBERTS, innocently : "Yes, indeed ! Why, what in the world can be keeping him?" A nursemaid enters and beckons MRS. ROBERTS to the door with a glance. She runs to her ; they whisper ; and then MRS. ROBERTS, over her shoulder : "That ridiculous great boy of mine says he can't go to sleep unless I come and kiss him good-night."

LAWTON : "Which ridiculous great boy, I wonder?—Roberts, or Campbell? But I didn't know they had gone to bed !"

MRS. BEMIS : "You are too bad, papa ! You know it's little Neddy."

MRS. ROBERTS, vanishing : "Oh, I don't mind his nonsense, Lou. I'll fetch them both back with me."

LAWTON, after making a melodramatic search for concealed listeners at the doors :

“Now, friends, I have a revelation to make in Mrs. Roberts’s absence. I have found out the garotter—the assassin.”

ALL THE OTHERS: “What!”

LAWTON: “He has been secured—”

MRS. CRASHAW, severely: “Well, I’m very glad of it.”

YOUNG BEMIS: “By the police?”

MRS. BEMIS, incredulously: “Papa!”

BEMIS: “But there were several of them. Have they all been arrested?”

LAWTON: “There was only one, and none of him has been arrested.”

MRS. CRASHAW: “Where is he, then?”

LAWTON: “In this house.”

MRS. CRASHAW: “Now, Dr. Lawton, you and I are old friends—I shouldn’t like to say *how* old—but if you don’t instantly be serious, I—I’ll carry my rheumatism to somebody else.”

LAWTON: “My *dear* Mrs. Crashaw, you know how much I prize that rheumatism of yours! I will be serious—I will only be too serious. The garotter is Mr. Roberts himself.”

ALL, horror-struck: “Oh!”

LAWTON: “He went out without his watch. He thought he was robbed, but he wasn’t. He ran after the supposed thief,

our poor friend Bemis here, and took Bemis's watch away, and brought it home for his own."

YOUNG BEMIS: "Yes, but—"

MRS. BEMIS: "But, papa—"

BEMIS: "How do you know it? I can see how such a thing might happen, but—how do you know it *did*?"

LAWTON: "I divined it."

MRS. CRASHAW: "Nonsense!"

LAWTON: "Very well, then, I read of just such a case in the *Advertiser* a year ago. It occurs annually—in the newspapers. And I'll tell you what, Mrs. Crashaw—Roberts found out his mistake as soon as he went to his dressing-room; and that ingenious nephew of yours, who's closeted with him there, has been trying to put him up to something—to some game."

MRS. CRASHAW: "Willis has too much sense. He would know that Edward couldn't carry out any sort of game."

LAWTON: "Well, then, he's getting Roberts to let *him* carry out the game."

MRS. CRASHAW: "Edward couldn't do that either."

LAWTON: "Very well, then, just wait till they come back. Will you leave me to deal with Campbell?"

MRS. CRASHAW: "What are you going to do?"

YOUNG BEMIS: "You mustn't forget that he got us out of the elevator, sir."

MRS. BEMIS: "We might have been there yet if it hadn't been for him, papa."

MRS. CRASHAW: "I shouldn't want Willis mortified."

BEMIS: "Nor Mr. Roberts annoyed. We're fellow-sufferers in this business."

LAWTON: "Oh, leave it to me, leave it to me! I'll spare their feelings. Don't be afraid. Ah, there they come! Now don't say anything. I'll just step into the ante-room here."

II

MR. ROBERTS, MR. CAMPBELL, AND THE OTHERS

ROBERTS, entering the room before CAMPBELL, and shaking hands with his guests: "Ah, Mr. Bemis; Mrs. Bemis; Aunt Mary! You've heard of our comical little coincidence—our—Mr. Bemis and my—" He halts, confused, and looks around for the moral support of WILLIS, who follows hilariously.

WILLIS: "Greatest joke on record! But I won't spoil it for you, Roberts. Go on!" In a low voice to ROBERTS: "And don't look so confoundedly down in the mouth. They won't think it's a joke at all."

ROBERTS, with galvanic lightness: "Yes, yes—*such* a joke! Well, you see—you see—"

MRS. CRASHAW: "See *what*, Edward? Do get it out!"

WILLIS, jollily: "Ah, ha, ha!"

ROBERTS, lugubriously: "Ah, ha, ha!"

MRS. BEMIS: "How funny! Ha, ha, ha!"

YOUNG MR. BEMIS: "Capital! capital!"

BEMIS: "Excellent!"

WILLIS: "Go on, Roberts, do! or I shall die! Ah, ha, ha!"

ROBERTS, in a low voice of consternation to WILLIS: "Where was I? I can't go on unless I know where I was."

WILLIS, *sotto voce* to ROBERTS: "You weren't anywhere! For Heaven's sake, make a start!"

ROBERTS, to the others, convulsively: "Ha, ha, ha! I supposed all the time, you know, that I had been robbed, and—and—"

WILLIS: "Go on! go on!"

ROBERTS, whispering: "I can't do it!"

WILLIS, whispering: "You've *got* to! You're the beaver that clomb the tree. Laugh naturally, now!"

ROBERTS, with a staccato groan, which he tries to make pass for a laugh: "And then I ran after the man—" He stops, and regards MR. BEMIS with a ghastly stare.

MRS. CRAWSHAW: "What is the matter with you, Edward? Are you sick?"

WILLIS: "Sick? No! Can't you see that he can't get over the joke of the thing? It's killing him." To ROBERTS: "Brace up, old man! You're doing it splendidly."

ROBERTS, hopelessly: "And then the other man—the man that had robbed me—the man that I had pursued—ugh!"

WILLIS: "Well, it *is* too much for him. I shall have to tell it myself, I see."

ROBERTS, making a wild effort to command himself: "And so—so—this man—man—ma—"

WILLIS: "O good Lord—" DR. LAWTON suddenly appears from the ante-room and confronts him. "Oh, the devil!"

LAWTON, folding his arms, and fixing his eyes upon him: "Which means that you forgot I was coming."

WILLIS: "Doctor, you read a man's symptoms at a glance."

LAWTON: "Yes; and I can see that you are in a bad way, Mr. Campbell."

WILLIS: "Why don't you advertise, Doctor? Patients need only enclose a lock of their hair, and the colour of their eyes, with one dollar to pay the cost of materials, which will be sent, with full directions for treatment, by return mail. Seventh son of a seventh son."

LAWTON: "Ah, don't try to jest it away, my poor friend. This is one of those obscure diseases of the heart—induration of the pericardium—which, if not taken in time, result in deceitfulness above all things, and desperate wickedness."

WILLIS: "Look here, Dr. Lawton, what are you up to?"

LAWTON: "Look here, Mr. Campbell, what is your little game?"

WILLIS: "*I don't know what you're up to.*" He shrugs his shoulders and walks up the room.

LAWTON, shrugging his shoulders and walking up the room abreast of CAMPBELL: "*I don't know what your little game is.*" They return together, and stop, confronting each other.

WILLIS : "But if you think I'm going to give myself away—"

LAWTON : "If you suppose I'm going to take you at your own figure—" They walk up the room together, and return as before.

WILLIS : "Mrs. Bemis, what is this unnatural parent of yours after?"

MRS. BEMIS, tittering : "Oh, I'm sure *I* can't tell."

WILLIS : "Aunt Mary, you used to be a friend of mine. Can't you give me some sort of clue?"

MRS. CRASHAW : "I should be ashamed of you, Willis, if you accepted anybody's help."

WILLIS, sighing : "Well, this is pretty hard on an orphan. Here I come to join a company of friends at the fireside of a burgled brother-in-law, and I find myself in a nest of conspirators." Suddenly, after a moment : "Oh, *I* understand. Why, I ought to have seen at once. But no matter—it's just as well. I'm sure that we shall hear Dr. Lawton leniently, and make allowance for his well-known foible. Roberts is bound by the laws of hospitality, and Mr. Bemis is the father-in-law of his daughter."

MRS. BEMIS, in serious dismay : "Why, Mr. Campbell, what do you mean?"

WILLIS: "Simply that the mystery is solved—the double garotter is discovered. I'm sorry for you, Mrs. Bemis; and no one will wish to deal harshly with your father when he confesses that it was he who robbed Mr. Roberts and Mr. Bemis. All that they ask is to have their watches back. Go on, Doctor! How will that do, Aunt Mary, for a little flyer?"

MRS. CRASHAW: "Willis, I declare I never saw anybody like you!" She embraces him with joyous pride.

ROBERTS, coming forward anxiously: "But, my dear Willis—"

WILLIS, clapping his hand over his mouth, and leading him back to his place: "We can't let you talk now. I've no doubt you'll be considerate, and all that, but Dr. Lawton has the floor. Go on, Doctor! Free your mind! Don't be afraid of telling the whole truth! It will be better for you in the end." He rubs his hands gleefully, and then thrusting the points of them into his waistcoat pockets, stands beaming triumphantly upon LAWTON.

LAWTON: "Do you think so?" With well-affected trepidation: "Well, friends, if I must confess this—this—"

WILLIS: "High-handed outrage. Go on."

LAWTON : “ I suppose I must. I shall not expect mercy for myself ; perhaps you ’ll say that, as an old and hardened offender, I don’t deserve it. But I had an accomplice—a young man very respectably connected, and who, whatever his previous life may have been, had managed to keep a good reputation ; a young man a little apt to be misled by overweening vanity and the ill-advised flattery of his friends ; but I hope that neither of you gentlemen will be hard upon him, but will consider his youth, and perhaps his congenital moral and intellectual deficiencies, even when you find your watches—on Mr. Campbell’s person.” He leans forward, rubbing his hands, and smiling upon CAMPBELL. “ How will that do, Mr. Campbell, for a flyer ? ”

WILLIS, turning to Mrs. Crashaw : “ One ahead, Aunt Mary ? ”

LAWTON, clasping him by the hand : “ No, generous youth—even ! ” They shake hands, clapping each other on the back with their lefts, and joining in the general laugh.

BEMIS, coming forward jovially : “ Well, now, I gladly forgive you both—or whoever *did* rob me—if you ’ll only give me back my watch.”

WILLIS: "*I haven't got your watch.*"

LAWTON: "*Nor I.*"

ROBERTS, rather faintly, and coming reluctantly forward: "*I—I have it, Mr. Bemis.*" He produces it from one waistcoat pocket and hands it to BEMIS. Then, visiting the other: "*And what's worse, I have my own. I don't know how I can ever explain it, or atone to you for my extraordinary behaviour. Willis thought you might finally see it as a joke, and I've done my best to pass it off lightly—*"

WILLIS: "*And you succeeded. You had all the lightness of a sick hippopotamus.*"

ROBERTS: "*I'm afraid so. I'll have the chain mended, of course. But when I went out this evening I left my watch on my dressing-table, and when you struck against me in the Common I missed it, and supposed I had been robbed, and I ran after you and took yours—*"

WILLIS: "*Being a man of the most violent temper and the most desperate courage—*"

ROBERTS: "*But I hope, my dear sir, that I didn't hurt you seriously?*"

BEMIS: "*Not at all—not the least.*" Shaking him cordially by both hands: "*I'm all right. Mrs. Roberts has healed*

all my wounds with her skilful needle ; I've got on one of your best neckties, and this lace handkerchief of your wife's, which I'm going to keep for a souvenir of the most extraordinary adventure of my life—"

LAWTON : "Oh, it's an old newspaper story, Bemis, I tell you."

WILLIS : "Well, Aunt Mary, I wish Agnes were here now to see Roberts in his character of *moral* hero. He 'done' it with his little hatchet, but he waited to make sure that Bushrod was all right before he owned up."

MRS. ROBERTS, appearing : "Who, Willis ?"

WILLIS : "A very great and good man—George Washington."

MRS. ROBERTS : "I thought you meant Edward."

WILLIS : "Well, I don't suppose there is much difference."

MRS. CRASHAW : "The robber has been caught, Agnes."

MRS. ROBERTS : "Caught? Nonsense! You don't mean it! How can you trifle with such a subject? I know you are joking! Who is it?"

YOUNG BEMIS : "You never could guess."

MRS. BEMIS: "Never in the world!"

MRS. ROBERTS: "I don't wish to. But oh, Mr. Bemis, I've just come from my own children, and you must be merciful to his family!"

BEMIS: "For your sake, dear lady, I will."

BELLA, between the *portières*: "Dinner is ready, Mrs. Roberts."

MRS. ROBERTS, passing her hand through MR. BEMIS'S arm: "Oh, then you must go in with me, and tell me all about it."

THE MOUSE-TRAP

I

MRS. SOMERS ; MR. CAMPBELL

IN her drawing-room, MRS. AMY SOMERS, young, pretty, stylish, in the last evanescent traces of widowhood, stands confronting MR. WILLIS CAMPBELL. She has a newspaper in her hand, folded to the width of a single column, which she extends towards him with an effect of indignant menace.

MRS. SOMERS : "Then you acknowledge that it is yours?"

CAMPBELL : "I acknowledge that I made a speech before the legislative committee on behalf of the anti-suffragists. You knew I was going to do that. I don't know how they've reported it."

MRS. SOMERS, with severity : "Very well, then ; I will read it : 'Willis Campbell, Esq., was next heard on behalf of the petitioners. He touched briefly upon the fact that the

suffrage was evidently not desired by the vast majority of educated women.'"

CAMPBELL: "You've always said they didn't want it."

MRS. SOMERS: "That is not the point."

Reading: "'And many of them would feel it an onerous burden, and not a privilege.'"

CAMPBELL: "Well, didn't you—"

MRS. SOMERS: "Don't interrupt!" Reading: "'Which would compel them, at the cost of serious sacrifices, to contend at the polls with the ignorant classes, who would be sure to exercise the right if conferred.'"

CAMPBELL: "That was your own argument, Amy. They're almost your own words."

MRS. SOMERS: "That isn't what I object to." Reading: "'Mr. Campbell then referred in a more humorous strain to the argument, frequently used by the suffragists, that every taxpayer should have the right to vote. He said that he objected to this, because it implied that non-taxpayers should not have the right to vote, which would deprive of the suffrage a large body of adoptive citizens, who voted at all the elections with great promptness and assiduity. He thought the exemption of women from some duties required of men by the State fairly

offset the loss of the ballot in their case, and that until we were prepared to send ladies to battle we ought not to oblige them to go to the polls. Some skirmishing ensued between Mr. Campbell and Mr. Willington on the part of the suffragists, the latter gentleman affirming that in great crises of the world's history women had shown as much courage as men, and the former contending that this did not at all affect his position, since the courage of women was in high degree a moral courage, which was not evoked by the ordinary conditions of peace or war, but required the imminence of some extraordinary, some vital emergency.”

CAMPBELL: “Well, what do you object to in all that?”

MRS. SOMERS, tossing the paper on the table, and confronting him with her head lifted and her hands clasped upon her left side: “Everything! It is an insult to women.”

CAMPBELL: “*Woman*, you mean. I don't think women would mind it. Who's been talking to you, Amy?”

MRS. SOMERS: “Nobody. It doesn't matter who's been talking to me. That is not the question.”

CAMPBELL: “It's the question I asked.”

MRS. SOMERS: "It isn't the question *I* asked. I wish simply to know what you mean by that speech."

CAMPBELL: "I wish you knew how pretty you look in that dress." Mrs. Somers involuntarily glances down at the skirt of it on either side, and rearranges it a little, folding her hands again as before. "But perhaps you do."

MRS. SOMERS, with dignity: "Will you answer my question?"

CAMPBELL: "Certainly. I meant what I said."

MRS. SOMERS: "Oh, you did! Very well, then! When a woman stands by the bedside of her sick child, and risks her life from contagion, what kind of courage do you call that?"

CAMPBELL: "Moral."

MRS. SOMERS: "And when she remains in a burning building or a sinking ship—as they often do—and perishes, while her child is saved, what kind of courage is it?"

CAMPBELL: "Moral."

MRS. SOMERS: "When she seizes an axe and defends her little ones against a bear or a wolf that's just bursting in the cabin door, what kind of courage does she show?"

CAMPBELL: "Moral."

MRS. SOMERS: "Or when her babe crawls up the track, and she snatches it from the very jaws of the cow-catcher—"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, hold on, now, Amy! Be fair! It's the engineer who does that: he runs along the side of the locomotive, and catches the smiling infant up, and lays it in the mother's arms as the train thunders by. His name is usually Hank Rollins. The mother is always paralysed with terror."

MRS. SOMERS: "Of course she is. But in those other cases how does her courage differ from a man's? If hers is always moral, what kind of courage does a man show when he faces the cannon?"

CAMPBELL: "Immoral. Come, Amy, are you trying to prove that women are braver than men? Well, they are. I never was in any danger yet that I didn't wish I was a woman, for then I should have the courage to face it, or else I could turn and run without disgrace. All that I said in that speech was that women haven't so much nerve as men."

MRS. SOMERS: "They have more."

CAMPBELL: "Nerves—yes."

MRS. SOMERS: "No, nerve. Take Dr. Cissy Gay, that little, slender, delicate, sensitive thing: what do you suppose she

went through when she was studying medicine, and walking the hospitals, and all those disgusting things? And Mrs. J. Plunkett Harmon: do you mean to say that *she* has no nerve, facing all sorts of audiences, on the platform, everywhere? Or Rev. Lily Barber, living down all that ridicule, and going quietly on in her work—”

CAMPBELL: “Oh, *they*’ve been talking to you.”

MRS. SOMERS: “They have *not*! And if they have, Dr. Gay is as much opposed to suffrage as you are.”

CAMPBELL: “As *I*? Aren’t you opposed to it too?”

MRS. SOMERS: “Of course I am. Or I was till you made that speech.”

CAMPBELL: “It wasn’t exactly intended to convert you.”

MRS. SOMERS: “It has placed me in a false position. Everybody knows, or the same as knows, that we’re engaged—”

CAMPBELL: “Well, *I*’m not ashamed of it, Amy.”

MRS. SOMERS, severely: “No matter! And now it will look as if I had no ideas of my own, and was just swayed about any way by you. A woman is despicable that joins with men in ridiculing women.”

CAMPBELL: "Who's been saying that?"

MRS. SOMERS: "No one. It doesn't matter who's been saying it. Mrs. Mervane has been saying it."

CAMPBELL: "Mrs. Mervane?"

MRS. SOMERS: "Yes, Mrs. Mervane, that you're always praising and admiring so for her good sense and her right ideas. Didn't you say she wrote as logically and forcibly as a man?"

CAMPBELL: "Yes, I did."

MRS. SOMERS: "Very well, then, she says that if anything could turn her in favour of suffrage, it is that speech of yours. She says it's a subtle attack upon the whole sex."

CAMPBELL: "Well, I give it up! You are all alike. You take everything personally, in the first place, and then you say it's an attack on all women. Couldn't I make this right by publishing a card to acknowledge your physical courage before the whole community, Amy? Then your friends would have to say that I had recognised the pluck of universal womanhood."

MRS. SOMERS: "No, sir; you can't make it right now. And I'm sorry, sorry, *sorry* I signed the anti-suffrage petition. Nothing

will ever teach men to appreciate women till women practically assert themselves."

CAMPBELL: "That sounds very much like another quotation, Amy."

MRS. SOMERS: "And they must expect to be treated as cowards till they show themselves heroes. And they must first of all have the ballot."

CAMPBELL: "Oh!"

MRS. SOMERS: "Yes. Then, and not till then, men will acknowledge their equality in all that is admirable in both. Then there will be no more puling insolence about moral courage and vital emergencies to evoke it."

CAMPBELL: "I don't see the steps to this conclusion, but the master-mind of Mrs. J. Plunkett Harmon reaches conclusions at a bound."

MRS. SOMERS: "It *wasn't* Mrs. Harmon."

CAMPBELL: "Oh, well, Rev. Lily Barber, then. You needn't tell me *you* originated that stuff, Amy. But I submit for the present. Think it over, my dear, and when I come back to-morrow—"

MRS. SOMERS: "Perhaps you had better not come back to-morrow."

CAMPBELL: "Why?"

MRS. SOMERS: "Because—because I'm

afraid we are not in sympathy. Because if you thought that I needed some vital emergency to make me show that I was ready to die for you any moment—”

CAMPBELL: “*Die* for me? I want you to live for me, Amy.”

MRS. SOMERS: “—and the emergency never came, you would despise me.”

CAMPBELL: “Never!”

MRS. SOMERS: “If you have such a low opinion of women generally—”

CAMPBELL: “*I* a low opinion of women!”

MRS. SOMERS: “You said they were cowards.”

CAMPBELL: “I didn’t say they were cowards. And if I seemed to say so, it was my misfortune. I honestly and truly think, Amy, that when a woman is roused, she isn’t afraid of anything in heaven or on—” He stops abruptly, and looks towards the corner of the room.

MRS. SOMERS: “What is it?”

CAMPBELL: “Oh, nothing. I thought I saw a mouse.”

MRS. SOMERS: “A mouse!” She flings herself upon him, and clutches him with convulsive energy. Then suddenly freeing him, she leaps upon a chair, and stoops

over to hold her train from the floor. "Oh, drive it out, drive it *out*! Don't *kill* it. Oh—e-e-e-e! *Drive* it out! Oh, what shall I do? Oh, Willis, love, jump on a chair! Oh, horrid little dreadful reptile! Oh, *drive* it out!" In uttering these appeals MRS. SOMERS alternately loses her hold upon her train in order to clasp her face in her hands, and then uncovers her face to seize her train. "Oh, is it *gone*? Come here, Willis, and let me hold your hand! Or no! Drive it, drive it, *drive* it out!"

CAMPBELL, going about the room in deliberate examination: "I can't find it. I guess it's gone into its hole again."

MRS. SOMERS: "No, it hasn't! It hasn't got any hole here. It must have come in from somewhere else. Oh, I *hope* I shall have a little wisdom *some* time, and never, never, never have cake and wine brought into the drawing-room again, no matter *how* faint with walking any one is. Of course it was the smell of the fruit and crumbs attracted it; and they might just as well take the horse-cars, but they said they had walked all the way to get me to sign the suffrage petition, and when I said I'd signed the anti-suffrage, of course I had

to offer them something ; I couldn't do less. Have you driven it out ? ”

CAMPBELL : “ I've done my best. But I can't find it, and I can't drive it out till I *do* find it. ”

MRS. SOMERS : “ It's run into the fireplace. Rattle the tongs ! ” CAMPBELL goes to the fireplace and rattles the tongs against the shovel, MRS. SOMERS meanwhile covering her face. “ Ow—ugh—e-e-e-e ! Is it gone ? ” She uncovers her eyes.

CAMPBELL : “ It never was there. ”

MRS. SOMERS : “ Yes, it was, Willis. Don't tell me it wasn't ! Where else was it if it wasn't there ? Look under that book-table ! ”

CAMPBELL : “ Which one ? ”

MRS. SOMERS : “ That one with the shelf coming down almost to the carpet. Poke under it with the poker ! ” As CAMPBELL obeys, she again hides her face. “ U-u-u-gh ! Is it gone *now* ? ”

CAMPBELL : “ It wasn't there. ”

MRS. SOMERS : “ Poke hard ! Bang against the mop-board ! Bang ! ”

CAMPBELL, poking and banging : “ There ! I tell you it never was there. ”

MRS. SOMERS, uncovering her face : “ Oh, what shall I do ? It must be somewhere in

the room, and I never can breathe till you've found it. Bang again!"

CAMPBELL: "Nonsense! It's gone long ago. Do you suppose a mouse of any presence of mind or self-respect would stay here after all this uproar!" He restores the tongs to their stand with a clash.

MRS. SOMERS, responsive to the clash: "Ow!"

CAMPBELL, advancing towards her and extending his hand: "Come, Amy; get down now. I must be going."

MRS. SOMERS, in horror: "Get down? Going?"

CAMPBELL: "Certainly. I can't stay here all day. I've got to follow that mouse out into the street and have him arrested. It's a public duty."

MRS. SOMERS: "Don't throw ridicule on it!" After a moment: "You know I can't let you go till I've seen that mouse leave this room. Go all round and stamp in the corners." She covers her face again. "Ugh!"

CAMPBELL: "How are you going to see him leave the room if you won't look? He's left long ago. I wouldn't stay if I was a mouse. And I've got to go, anyway."

MRS. SOMERS, uncovering her face: "No! I beg, I *command* you to stay, or I shall never get out of this room alive. You *know* I shan't." A ring at the street door is heard. "Oh *dear*, what shall I do? I've told Jane I would see anybody that called, and now I daren't step my foot to the floor. What *shall* I do?"

CAMPBELL, with authority: "You must get down. There's no mouse here, I tell you; and if people come and find you standing on a chair in your drawing-room, what will they think?"

MRS. SOMERS: "I can kneel on it." She drops on her knees on the chair. "There!"

CAMPBELL: "That's no better. It's worse."

MRS. SOMERS, listening to the party at the door below, which the maid has opened: "'Sh! I want to make out who it is. 'Sh! Yes—it is!" After listening: "Yes; it's Mrs. Miller and Lou Bemis and Mrs. Curwen! I don't see how they happen to come together, for Mrs. Miller and Mrs. Curwen perfectly hate each other. Oh yes! I know! They're all on the way to Mrs. Ransom's reception; he's showing his pictures and some of her things—horrid daubs; I don't

see how she can have the face—and they've met here by accident. 'Sh! She's showing them into the reception-room. Yes, that's quite right." MRS. SOMERS delivers these sentences in a piercing whisper of extreme volubility. "Now, as soon as she brings up their cards, I'll say I'm not at all well—that I'm engaged—just going out. No, that won't do. I *must* be sick. Anything else would be perfectly insulting after saying that I was at home; and Jane has got to go back and tell them she forgot that I had gone to bed with a severe headache." As JANE appears at the drawing-room door, and falters at sight of MRS. SOMERS kneeling on her chair, that lady beckons her to her, frowning, shaking her head, and pressing her finger on her lip to enforce silence, and takes the cards from her, while she continues in whisper: "Yes. All right, Jane! Go straight back and tell them you forgot I had gone to bed with a perfectly blinding headache; and don't let another soul into the house. Mr. Campbell saw a mouse, and I can't get down till he's caught it. Go!"

II

JANE ; MRS. SOMERS ; MR. CAMPBELL ; THEN
MRS. MILLER ; MRS. CURWEN ; MRS. BEMIS

JANE, after a moment of petrification : “ A mouse ! In the room here ? Oh, my goodness gracious me ! ” She leaps upon the chair next to MRS. SOMERS, who again springs to her feet.

MRS. SOMERS : “ Did you see it ? Oh, c-e-e-e ! ”

JANE : “ W-o-o-o-o ! I don’t know ! Where was it ? Oh yes, I thought— ” They clutch each other convulsively, and blend their cries, at the sound of which the ladies in the reception-room below come flocking upstairs into the drawing-room.

THE LADIES, at the sight of MRS. SOMERS and her servant : “ What is it ? what is it ? ”

MRS. SOMERS : “ Oh, there’s a *mouse* in this room. Oh, jump on chairs ! ”

MRS. MILLER, vaulting into the middle of the sofa : “ A mouse ! ”

MRS. LOU BEMIS, alighting upon a slight reception-chair : “ Oh, not in *this* room, Mrs. Somers ! *Don’t* say it ! ”

MRS. CURWEN, with a laugh of mingled

terror and enjoyment from the top of the table where she finds herself: "Where is it?"

MRS. SOMERS: "I don't know. I didn't see it. But, oh! it's here somewhere. Mr. Campbell saw it, and Jane did when she came up with your cards, and he's been trying to drive it out, but he can't even *budge* it; and—"

CAMPBELL, desperately: "Ladies, there isn't any mouse here! I've been racketing round here with the shovel and tongs all over the room, and the mouse is gone. You can depend upon that. You're as safe here as you would be in your own rooms."

MRS. SOMERS: "How can you say such a thing? No, I won't be responsible if anything happens. The mouse is in this room. No one has seen it go out, and it's here still."

MRS. BEMIS, balancing herself with difficulty on her chair: "Oh dear! how tippy it is! I'm sure it's going to break."

MRS. CURWEN: "Get up here with me, Mrs. Bemis. We can protect each other."

MRS. MILLER: "You would both fall off. Better come here on the sofa, Mrs. Bemis."

MRS. CURWEN: "The mouse could run up that ottoman sofa as easily as the ground."

MRS. MILLER, covering her face : " Oh, how can you say such a thing ? "

MRS. BEMIS : " Oh, I know I 'm going to fall ! "

MRS. SOMERS : " Willis, for shame ! Help her ! "

CAMPBELL : " But how—how can I help—"

MRS. SOMERS : " Get her another chair. "

CAMPBELL : " Oh ! " He pushes a large armchair towards MRS. BEMIS, who leaps into it with a wild cry, spurning the reception-chair half across the room in her flight.

MRS. BEMIS : " Oh, thank you, thank you, Mr. Campbell ! Oh, I shall always bless you ! "

MRS. CURWEN : " Yes, you have saved our lives. Where there's a man, I don't care for a thousand mice. "

MRS. MILLER : " Oh, how very frank ! "

MRS. CURWEN : " Yes, I 'm nothing if not open-minded. "

CAMPBELL, surveying her with amusement and interest : " I don't believe you're very much scared. "

MRS. BEMIS : " Oh yes, she is, Mr. Campbell. She keeps up that way, and then the first thing she faints. "

MRS. CURWEN: "Not on centre-tables, my dear; there isn't room."

CAMPBELL, with increasing fascination: "Why don't you get down, and set the rest an example of courage."

MRS. CURWEN: "I prefer to set the example here: it's safer."

CAMPBELL: "You look like the statue of some goddess on her altar—or saint—"

MRS. CURWEN: "Thank you. If you will say victim, I will agree with you. Say Iphigenia. But the others are too much. I draw the line at goddesses and saints."

CAMPBELL: "And *you're* afraid of mice, too?"

MRS. CURWEN: "To be sure I am."

CAMPBELL: "Well, there is no mouse down here—nothing but a miserable man. Now, will you get down?"

MRS. SOMERS: "Mrs. Curwen, don't think of it! He's just *saying* it. The mouse *is* there." To CAMPBELL: "You are placing us all in a very ridiculous position."

CAMPBELL: "I am sorry for that; I am, indeed. I give you my word of honour that I don't believe there's any mouse in the room."

MRS. SOMERS: "Jane just saw it."

CAMPBELL: "She *thought* she saw it, but

I don't think she did. A lion would have been scared out by this time." A ring at the door is heard.

MRS. SOMERS: "There, Jane, there's some one ringing! You must go to the door."

JANE, throwing her apron over her head: "Oh, please, Mrs. Somers, I can't go! I'm so afraid of mice!"

MRS. SOMERS: "Nonsense! you *must* go. It's perfectly ridiculous your pretending not."

JANE: "Oh, I couldn't, Mrs. Somers! I was always so from a child. I can't bear 'em."

MRS. SOMERS: "This is disgraceful. Do you mean to say that you won't do what I ask you? Very well, then; you can go! You needn't stay the week out; I will pay you, and you can go at once. Do you understand?"

JANE: "Yes, I do, and I'd be glad to go this very minute, but I don't dare to get down."

MRS. SOMERS: "But why shouldn't you get down? There isn't the least danger. Is there any danger now, Mr. Campbell?"

CAMPBELL: "Not the least in the world. Mouse gone long ago."

MRS. SOMERS : " There ! "

JANE : " I can't help it. There are so many in the dining-room—"

MRS. SOMERS : " In *my* dining-room? Oh, my goodness ! why didn't you tell me before ? "

JANE : " And one ran right over my foot. "

MRS. SOMERS : " Your foot? Oh, I wonder that you live to tell it ! Why haven't you put traps? Where's the cat ? "

JANE : " The cook's spoiled the cat, feeding it so much. "

MRS. MILLER : " Yes, that's the worst of cooks : they always spoil cats. "

MRS. BEMIS : " They overfeed them. "

MRS. MILLER : " And then, of course, the cats are worth nothing as mousers. I had a cat—" The bell sounds again.

MRS. SOMERS : " There ! Some one *must* go. "

CAMPBELL : " Why, *I'll* go to the door. "

MRS. SOMERS : " And leave *us* here ! Never ! How can you propose such a thing ? If you dare to go, I shall die. Don't think of such a thing. "

JANE : " The cook will go if they keep

ringing. Oh! ugh! hu, hu! When ever shall I get out of this?"

MRS. SOMERS: "Stop crying, Jane! Be calm! You're perfectly safe. You may be glad it's no worse. 'Sh! There's the cook going to the door at last. Who can it be? Listen!"

JANE, clutching MRS. SOMERS: "Oh! ugh! Wo-o-o-o!"

ALL THE LADIES: "E-e-e-e!"

MRS. SOMERS: "What's the *matter*, Jane? Let me go! *What's the matter?*"

JANE: "Oh, I thought I was falling—right down in among it!"

MRS. AGNES ROBERTS, calling up from below: "What in the world *is it*, Amy?"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, my prophetic soul, my sister!"

MRS. SOMERS, shouting: "Is that you, Agnes? Don't come up! Don't come up for your *life*! *Don't* come up unless you wish to perish instantly. Oh, it's dreadful, your coming now. Keep away! Go right straight out of the house unless you wish to fling your life away."

THE OTHER LADIES: "Don't come! Don't come! Keep away! It will do no good!"

III

MRS. ROBERTS AND THE OTHERS

MRS. ROBERTS, mounting the stairs, as if lured to her doom by an irresistible fascination: "Not come? Keep away? Who's talking? What is it? Oh, *Amy*, what is it?" As she reaches the stair-landing space before the drawing-room and looks in, where CAMPBELL stands in the middle of the floor with his hands in his pockets and despair in his face: "You here, Willis? What are you doing? What is it?" Her eye wanders to the ladies trembling in their several refuges, and a dawning apprehension makes itself seen in her face? "What is— Oh, it is—it isn't—it isn't a—mouse? Oh, *Amy*! *Amy*! *Amy*! Oh, how *could* you let me come right into the room with it? Oh, I can never forgive you! I thought it was somebody getting killed. Oh, why didn't you *tell* me it was a mouse?" She alights on the piano-stool, and keeps it from rocking by staying herself with one hand on the piano-top.

CAMPBELL: "Now look here, Agnes—"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Hush! Don't speak to me, Willis! You unnatural, cruel,

heartless— Why did *you* let me come in ? I wonder at you, Willis ! If you had been *half* the brother you ought to be— Oh dear, dear ! I know how you will go away and laugh now and tell everybody. I suppose you think it corroborates that silly speech of yours before the legislative committee that's wounded all your best friends so, and that I've been talking myself perfectly dumb defending you about." MRS. ROBERTS unconsciously gives a little push for emphasis, and the stool revolves with her. "E-e-e-e ! Oh, Amy, how can you have one of these old-fashioned, horrid, whirling things, fit for nothing but boarding-house parlours !"

MRS. SOMERS, with just pique: "I'm very sorry you don't like my piano-stool, Agnes. I keep it because it was my poor mother's ; but if you'll give me due notice another time, I'll try to have a different—"

MRS. ROBERTS, bursting into tears : "Oh, don't say another word, Amy dear ! I'm so ashamed of myself that I can hardly breathe now !"

CAMPBELL : "And I'm ashamed of you too, Agnes ! Get down off that stool, and behave yourself like a sensible woman." He goes towards her as if to lift her down.

“The mouse is gone long ago. And if it was here it wouldn’t bite you.”

MRS. ROBERTS, repelling him with one hand while she clings insecurely to the piano with the other: “Bite? Do you suppose I care for a mouse’s *biting*, Willis? I wouldn’t care for the bite of an elephant. It’s the *idea*. Can’t you understand?”

THE OTHER LADIES: “Oh yes, it’s the *idea*.”

MRS. SOMERS: “Yes, I told him in the first place, Agnes, that it was the *idea* of a mouse.”

MRS. CURWEN: “It’s the innate repugnance.”

CAMPBELL: “It’s the enmity put between the mouse that tempted Eve and the woman—”

MRS. ROBERTS: “Don’t be—sacrilegious, Willis! Don’t, for your own sake!”

MRS. SOMERS: “Yes, it’s very easy to make fun of the Bible.”

MRS. ROBERTS: “Or woman. And the wit is equally contemptible in either case.”

MRS. MILLER: “Other animals feel about mice just as we do. I was reading only the other day of an elephant—your mentioning an elephant reminded me of it, Mrs.—”

MRS. ROBERTS : " Oh ! "

THE OTHER LADIES : " E-e-e-e ! "

MRS. SOMERS : " What is it ? "

MRS. ROBERTS : " Nothing. I thought I was going to fall. Go on, Mrs. Miller. "

MRS. MILLER : " Oh, it's merely that the elephant was asleep, and a mouse ran up its trunk—"

ALL THE LADIES : " Horrors ! "

MRS. MILLER : " And the poor creature sprang up in the greatest alarm, and belowed till it woke the whole menagerie. It simply shows that it isn't because women are nervously constituted that they're afraid of mice, for the nervous organism of an elephant—"

MRS. SOMERS : " The first time I went to Europe I found a mouse in one of *my* trunks. It was a steamer trunk that you push under the berth, and I've perfectly loathed them ever since. "

MRS. BEMIS : " Once in a farmhouse where we were staying the summer, a mouse ran right across the table. "

ALL THE LADIES : " Oh ! "

MRS. CURWEN : " One morning I found one in the bath-tub. "

ALL THE LADIES : " Oh, Mrs. Curwen ! "

MRS. CURWEN : " We'd heard it.

scrambling round all night. It was stone dead."

ALL THE LADIES: "Hideous!"

CAMPBELL: "Why, bless my soul! if the mouse was dead—"

MRS. SOMERS: "Then it was ten times as bad as if it was alive. Can't you understand? It's the *idea*. But, oh, don't let's talk of it any more, ladies! Let's talk of something else. Agnes, are you going to Mrs. Ransom's?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "I've been. Nearly everybody's coming away."

MRS. MILLER: "Why, what time is it, Mrs. Somers?"

MRS. SOMERS: "I don't know."

CAMPBELL, looking at his watch: "It's ten minutes of six, and I've missed my appointment."

MRS. CURWEN: "And if we don't go now we shall miss the reception."

MRS. BEMIS: "Papa was very particular I should go, because he couldn't."

MRS. MILLER: "We must go at once."

MRS. SOMERS: "Oh, I'm so sorry! Jane, go down with the ladies."

JANE: "Oh, *please*, Mrs. Somers!"

MRS. MILLER: "But how are we to go?"

We are imprisoned here. We cannot get away. You must do something."

MRS. CURWEN: "It is your house, Mrs. Somers. You are responsible."

MRS. SOMERS: "But what can I do? I can't get down myself. And if I did, what good would it do?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "For shame, Willis, to laugh!"

CAMPBELL: "I wasn't laughing. I was merely smiling aloud."

MRS. ROBERTS: "It's the same thing. You ought to think of something."

MRS. SOMERS: "Oh yes, do, Willis. Think of something for my—for goodness' sake, and I will always thank you. You're so ingenious."

CAMPBELL: "Well, in the first place, I don't believe there's any mouse in the room."

MRS. SOMERS: "That is nonsense; Jane saw it. Is that all your ingenuity amounts to?"

MRS. ROBERTS, electrically: "Amy, I have an idea!"

MRS. SOMERS: "Oh, Agnes! How *like* you!"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Not at all. It's the simplest thing in the world. It's the

only way. And no thanks to Willis, either."

ALL THE LADIES: "Well? Well? Well?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "It's just this: all make a rush, one after another, and the rest scream. And Willis must keep beating the floor."

MRS. SOMERS: "How perfectly magnificent! Well, Agnes, you *have* got your wits about you! It is the very thing! Now, Mrs. Curwen, if you will jump down and make a rush—"

MRS. CURWEN: "It's for you to make the rush first, Mrs. Somers. You are the hostess."

MRS. SOMERS: "Yes, but I'm not going, don't you see? I've sent my card to Mrs. Ransom."

MRS. CURWEN: "Then, Mrs. Miller, will you, please—"

MRS. MILLER: "Mrs. Bemis is nearest the door. I think she will wish to start first."

MRS. BEMIS: "No; I will wait for the rest."

MRS. SOMERS: "That is a good idea. They ought to all rush together, not one after another. Don't you think so, Agnes?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Yes, that was what I meant. And we ought to all scream just before they start, so as to scare it."

MRS. SOMERS: "Oh, how capital! You *have* got a brain, Agnes! Now I begin to believe we shall live through it. And Mr. Campbell ought to beat the floor first, oughtn't he?"

CAMPBELL: "I haven't got anything to beat it with." He looks about the room. "But I can go down and get my cane."

ALL: "No!"

MRS. SOMERS: "Jane will go down and get it for you."

JANE: "Oh, I couldn't, Mrs. Somers!"

CAMPBELL: "Perhaps the poker—but it would spoil your carpet."

MRS. SOMERS: "No matter for the carpet; you can beat it into — pulp." CAMPBELL gets the poker and beats the carpet in different places. "Harder! Beat harder!"

MRS. ROBERTS: "You're not beating at all, Willis. You're just — temporising." CAMPBELL wildly thrashes the carpet.

MRS. SOMERS: "There! that is something like. Now scream, Agnes! Scream, Mrs. Curwen! Mrs. Miller, Lou, scream, please!"

ALL : "E-e-e-e !"

MRS. SOMERS : "But nobody started !"

MRS. CURWEN : "I didn't believe the rest would start, and so I didn't."

MRS. MILLER : "I was sure no one else would start."

MRS. BEMIS : "So was I."

MRS. ROBERTS : "We must have faith in each other, or else the plan's a failure. Now all scream !" They scream.

MRS. SOMERS : "E-e-e-e ! Keep beating the carpet, Willis ! Hard, hard, hard !" The other ladies all leap down from their perches, and rush screaming out of the drawing-room, followed by Jane, with a whoop that prolongs itself into the depths of the basement, after the retreating wails and hysterical laughter of the ladies have died out of the street door. "Oh, wasn't it splendid ? It was a perfect success."

IV

MRS. SOMERS ; MR. CAMPBELL

CAMPBELL, leaning on his poker, and panting with exhaustion : "They got out alive."

MRS. SOMERS : " And it was all Agnes's idea. Why, Agnes is gone too ! "

CAMPBELL : " Yes, Agnes is gone. I think it was a ruse of hers to save her own life. She's quite capable of it. "

MRS. SOMERS, with justice : " No, I don't think that. She was just carried away by the excitement of the moment. "

CAMPBELL : " At any rate she's gone. And now, Amy, don't you think you'd better get down ? "

MRS. SOMERS, in astonishment : " Get down ? Why, you must be crazy. How can I get down if it's still there ? "

CAMPBELL : " What ? "

MRS. SOMERS : " The mouse. "

CAMPBELL : " But it *isn't* there, my dear. You saw for yourself that it wasn't there. "

MRS. SOMERS : " Did you see it run out ? "

CAMPBELL : " No ; but— "

MRS. SOMERS : " Very well, then, it's there still. Of course it is. I wouldn't get down for worlds. "

CAMPBELL : " Oh, good heavens ! Do you expect to spend the rest of your life up there in that chair ? "

MRS. SOMERS : " I don't know. I shall not get down till I see that mouse leave this room. "

CAMPBELL, desperately : " Well, then, I must make a clean breast of it. There never was any mouse here."

MRS. SOMERS : " What do you mean ?"

CAMPBELL : " I mean that when we were talking—arguing—about the physical courage of women, I thought I would try a mouse. It's succeeded only too well. I'll never try another."

MRS. SOMERS : " And could you really be guilty of such a cruel—"

CAMPBELL : " Yes."

MRS. SOMERS : " Shameless—"

CAMPBELL : " I was."

MRS. SOMERS : " Despicable deception ?"

CAMPBELL : " It was vile, I know, but I did it."

MRS. SOMERS : " I don't believe it. No, rather than believe that of *you*, Willis, I would believe there were a million mice in the room."

CAMPBELL : " Amy, indeed—"

MRS. SOMERS : " No ; if you could deceive me then, you can deceive me now. If you could say there was a mouse in the room when there wasn't, you are quite capable of saying there isn't when there is. You are just saying it now to get me to get down."

CAMPBELL : " Upon my honour, I'm not."

MRS. SOMERS : "Oh, don't talk to me of honour ! The honour of a man who could revel—yes, *revel*—in the terrors of helpless women—"

CAMPBELL : "No, no ; I'd no idea of it, Amy."

MRS. SOMERS : "You will please not address me in that way, Mr. Campbell. You have forfeited all right to do so."

CAMPBELL : "I know it. What I did was very foolish and thoughtless."

MRS. SOMERS : "It was very low and ungentlemanly. I suppose you will go away and laugh over it with your—associates."

CAMPBELL : "Why not say my ruffianly accomplices at once, Amy ? No, I assure you that unless you tell of the affair, nobody shall ever hear of it from me. It's too disastrous a victory. I'm hoist by my own petard, caught in my own mouse-trap. There is such a thing as succeeding too well."

MRS. SOMERS : "I should *think* you would be ashamed of it. Suppose you *have* shown that women are nervous and excitable, does that prove anything ?"

CAMPBELL : "Nothing in the world."

MRS. SOMERS : "Very likely some of us will be sick from it. I dare say you think

that would be another triumphant argument."

CAMPBELL: "I shouldn't exult in it."

MRS. SOMERS: "I don't know when I shall ever get over it myself. I have had a dreadful shock."

CAMPBELL: "I'm sorry with all my heart—I am, indeed. I had no conception that you cared so much for mice—despised them so much."

MRS. SOMERS: "Oh yes, laugh, do! It's quite in character. But if you have such a contempt for women, of course you wouldn't want to *marry* one."

CAMPBELL: "Yes, I should, my dear. But *only* one."

MRS. SOMERS: "Very well, then! You can find some *other* one. All is over between *us*. Yes! I will send you back the precious gifts you have lavished upon me, and I will thank you for mine. A man who can turn the sex that his mother and sister belong to into ridicule can have no real love for his wife. I am glad that I have found you out in time."

CAMPBELL: "Do you really mean it, Amy?"

MRS. SOMERS: "Yes, I mean it. And I hope it will be a lesson to you. If you find

any other poor, silly, trusting creature that you can impose yourself upon for a gentleman as you have upon me, I advise you to reserve your low, vulgar, boyish tricks till after she is helplessly yours, or she may tear your hateful ring from her finger and fling it—" She attempts to pull a ring from her finger, but it will not come off. "Never mind! I will get it off with a little soap suds; and then—"

CAMPBELL: "Oh no, my dear! Come, I can allow for your excitement, but I can't stand everything, though I admit everything. When a man has said he's played a silly part he doesn't like to be told so, and as for imposing myself upon you for a gentleman—you must take that back, Amy."

MRS. SOMERS: "I do. I take it back. There hasn't been any imposture. I *knew* you were not a gentleman."

CAMPBELL: "Very good! Then I'm not fit for a lady's company, and I don't deny, though you're so hard upon me, that you're a lady, Amy. Good-bye." He bows and walks out of the room.

MRS. SOMERS, sending her voice after him in a wail of despair: "Willis!"

CAMPBELL, coming back: "Well?"

MRS. SOMERS: "I can't let you go." He

runs towards her, but she shrinks back on her chair against the wall. "No, no!"

CAMPBELL, hesitating: "Why did you call me back, then?"

MRS. SOMERS: "I—I didn't call you back; I just said—Willis."

CAMPBELL: "This is unworthy—even of *you*."

MRS. SOMERS: "Oh!"

CAMPBELL: "Do you admit that you have been too severe?"

MRS. SOMERS: "I don't know. What did I say?"

CAMPBELL: "A number of pleasant things; that I was a fraud, and no gentleman."

MRS. SOMERS: "Did I say that?"

CAMPBELL: "Yes, you did."

MRS. SOMERS: "I must have been very much incensed against you. I beg your pardon for—being so angry."

CAMPBELL: "That won't do. I don't care how angry you are if you don't call me names. You must take them back."

MRS. SOMERS: "Do you see my handkerchief anywhere about on the carpet?"

CAMPBELL, looking about, and then finding it: "Yes; here it is." He hands it to her, and she bends forward and takes it from him at arm's-length, whipping it

nervously out of his hand. "What's the matter?"

MRS. SOMERS: "Oh, nothing—nothing! Will you please give me my fan from the table there?" He obeys, and she catches it from him as she has caught the handkerchief. "Thank you! Keep away, please!"

CAMPBELL, angrily: "Really this is too much. If you are afraid of touching me—"

MRS. SOMERS: "No, I don't mind touching you; that isn't it. But if you stood so near, don't you see, it might run up *you*, and jump on to *me*."

CAMPBELL: "What might?"

MRS. SOMERS: "You know. The mouse."

CAMPBELL: "The mouse! There *is* no mouse."

MRS. SOMERS: "That's what you said before."

CAMPBELL: "Well, it's true. There isn't any mouse, and there never was."

MRS. SOMERS: "There's the *idea*. And that's all I ever cared for."

CAMPBELL: "Well, what are you going to do? I can't kill the idea of a mouse, and I can't drive it out of the room."

MRS. SOMERS: "I don't know what I'm going to do. I suppose I shall die here." She presses her handkerchief to her eyes.

"I shall never get out of the room alive. Then I hope you will be satisfied."

CAMPBELL: "Amy, how can you say such things to me?"

MRS. SOMERS: "Oh, I suppose you're fond of me in your contemptuous way. I never denied that. And I'm sorry, I'm sure, if I wounded your feelings by anything I said."

CAMPBELL: "Then you admit that I am a gentleman?"

MRS. SOMERS: "I didn't say that."

CAMPBELL: "And I can't be satisfied with less. I'll own that I've been stupid, but I haven't been ungentlemanly. I can't remain unless you do."

MRS. SOMERS: "And do you think threatening me is gentlemanly?"

CAMPBELL: "That isn't the question. Do you think I'm a gentleman?"

MRS. SOMERS: "You're what the *world* calls a gentleman—yes."

CAMPBELL: "Do *you* think I'm one?"

MRS. SOMERS: "How can I tell? I can't think at all, perched up here."

CAMPBELL: "Why don't you get down, then?"

MRS. SOMERS: "You know very well why."

CAMPBELL: "But you'll have to get down sometime. You can't stay there always."

MRS. SOMERS: "Why should you care?"

CAMPBELL: "You know I do care. You know that I love you dearly, and that I can't bear to see you in distress. Shall I beat the carpet, and you scream and make a rush?"

MRS. SOMERS: "No; I haven't the strength for that. I should drop in a faint as soon as I touched the floor."

CAMPBELL: "Oh, good heavens! What am I going to do, then?"

MRS. SOMERS: "I don't know. You got me into the trouble. I should think you could get me out of it."

CAMPBELL, after walking distractedly up and down the room: "There's only one way that I can think of, and if we're not engaged any longer, it wouldn't do."

MRS. SOMERS, yielding to her curiosity, after a moment's hesitation: "What is it?"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, unless we're still engaged it's no use proposing it."

MRS. SOMERS: "Can't you tell me without?"

CAMPBELL: "Impossible."

MRS. SOMERS, looking down at her fan: "Well, suppose we are still engaged,

then?" Looking up: "Yes, say we *are* engaged."

CAMPBELL: "It's to carry you out."

MRS. SOMERS, recoiling a little: "Oh! do you think that would be very nice?"

CAMPBELL: "Yes, I think it would. We can both scream, you know."

MRS. SOMERS: "Yes?"

CAMPBELL: "And then you fling yourself into my arms."

MRS. SOMERS: "Yes."

CAMPBELL: "And I rush out of the room with you."

MRS. SOMERS, with a deep breath: "I would never do it in the world."

CAMPBELL: "Well, then, you must stay where you are."

MRS. SOMERS, closing her fan: "You're not strong enough." She puts her handkerchief into her pocket. "You would be sure to fall." She gathers her train in one hand. "Well, then, look the other way!" Campbell turns his face aside and waits. "No, I can't do it."

CAMPBELL, retiring wrathfully to the other side of the room: "What shall we do, then?"

MRS. SOMERS, after reflection: "I don't know what we shall do. But if I were a man—"

CAMPBELL: "Well, if you were a man—"

MRS. SOMERS: "Don't you think Mrs. Curwen is fascinating?"

CAMPBELL: "*She* does."

MRS. SOMERS: "You must admit she's clever? And awfully stylish?"

CAMPBELL: "I don't admit anything of the kind. She's always posing. I think she made herself ridiculous standing there on the table."

MRS. SOMERS, fondly: "Oh, do you think so? You are very severe."

CAMPBELL: "Come now, Amy, what has all this got to do with it?"

MRS. SOMERS: "Nothing. But if I were a man—"

CAMPBELL: "Well?"

MRS. SOMERS: "Well, in the first place, I wouldn't have got you wrought up so."

CAMPBELL: "Well, but if you had! Suppose you had done all that I've done, and that I was up there in your place standing on a chair, and wouldn't let you leave the room, and wouldn't get down and walk out, and wouldn't allow myself to be carried, what should you do?"

MRS. SOMERS, who has been regarding him attentively over the top of her fan, which she holds pressed against her face:

“Why, I suppose if you wouldn’t let me help you willingly—I *should use violence.*”

CAMPBELL: “You witch!” As he makes a wild rush upon her, the curtain, which in the plays of this author has a strict regard for the *convenances*, abruptly descends.

FIVE O'CLOCK TEA

I

MRS. SOMERS ; MR. WILLIS CAMPBELL

MRS. AMY SOMERS, in a lightly floating tea-gown of singularly becoming texture and colour, employs the last moments of expectance before the arrival of her guests in marching up and down in front of the mirror which fills the space between the long windows of her drawing-room, looking over either shoulder for different effects of the drifting and eddying train, and advancing upon her image with certain little bobs and bows, and retreating from it with a variety of fan practice and elaborated courtesies, finally degenerating into burlesque, and a series of grimaces and "mouths" made at the responsive reflex. In the fascination of this amusement she is first ignorant, and then aware, of the presence of MR. WILLIS CAMPBELL, who on

the landing space between the drawing-room and the library stands, hat in hand, in the pleased contemplation of MRS. SOMERS'S manœuvres and contortions as the mirror reports them to him. MRS. SOMERS does not permit herself the slightest start on seeing him in the glass, but turns deliberately away, having taken time to prepare the air of gratification and surprise with which she greets him at half the length of the drawing-room.

MRS. SOMERS, giving her hand: "Why, Mr. Campbell! How very nice of you! How long have you been prowling about there on the landing? So stupid of them not to have turned up the gas!"

CAMPBELL: "I wasn't much incommoded. That sort of pitch darkness is rather becoming to my style of beauty, I find. The only objection was that I couldn't see you."

MRS. SOMERS: "Do you often make those pretty speeches?"

CAMPBELL: "When I can found them on fact."

MRS. SOMERS: "What can I say back? Oh! That I'm sorry I couldn't have met you when you were looking your best."

CAMPBELL: "Um! Do you think you

could have borne it? We might go out there."

MRS. SOMERS: "On second thoughts, no. I shall ring to have them turn up the gas."

CAMPBELL: "No; let me." He prevents her ringing, and going out into the space between the library and drawing-room, stands with his hand on the key of the gas-burner. "Now how do I look?"

MRS. SOMERS: "Beautiful."

CAMPBELL, turning up the gas: "And now?"

MRS. SOMERS: "Not *half* so well. Decidedly pitch darkness is becoming to you. Better turn it down again."

CAMPBELL, rejoining her in the drawing-room: "No; it isn't so becoming to you; and I'm not envious, whatever I am."

MRS. SOMERS: "You are generosity itself."

CAMPBELL: "If you come to phrases, I prefer magnanimity."

MRS. SOMERS: "Well, *say* magnanimity. Won't you sit down—while you have the opportunity?" She sinks upon the sofa, and indicates with her fan an easy-chair at one end of it.

CAMPBELL, dropping into it : "Are there going to be so many?"

MRS. SOMERS : "You never can tell about five o'clock tea. There mayn't be more than half a dozen; there may be thirty or forty. But I wished to affect your imagination."

CAMPBELL : "You had better have tried it in some other kind of weather. It's snowing like—"

MRS. SOMERS, running to the window, and peeping out through the side of the curtain : "It is ! like—cats and dogs !"

CAMPBELL : "Oh no ! You can't say that. It only rains that way. I was going to say it myself, but I stopped in time."

MRS. SOMERS, standing before the window with clasped hands : "No matter ! There will simply be nobody but bores. *They* come in any sort of weather."

CAMPBELL : "Thank you, Mrs. Somers. I'm glad I ventured out."

MRS. SOMERS, turning about : "What?" Then realising the situation : "Oh, *poor* Mr. Campbell !"

CAMPBELL : "Oh, don't mind *me* ! I can stand it if you can. I belong to a sex, thank you, that doesn't pretend to have any tact.

I would just as soon tell a man he was a bore as not. But I thought it might worry a lady, perhaps."

MRS. SOMERS: "Worry? I'm simply aghast at it. Did you ever hear of anything worse?"

CAMPBELL: "Well, not much worse."

MRS. SOMERS: "What can I do to make you forget it?"

CAMPBELL: "I can't think of anything. It seems to me that I shall always remember it as the most fortunate speech a lady ever made to me—and they have said some flattering things to me in my time."

MRS. SOMERS: "Oh, don't be entirely heartless. Wouldn't a cup of tea blot it out? With a Peak and Frea?" She advances beseechingly upon him. "Come, I will give you a cup at once."

CAMPBELL: "No, thank you; I would rather have it with the rest of the bores. They'll be sure to come."

MRS. SOMERS, resuming her seat on the sofa: "You are implacable. And I thought you said you were generous."

CAMPBELL: "No; merely magnanimous. I can't forget your cruel frankness; but I know *you* can, and I ask you to do it." He throws himself back in his chair with

a sigh. "And who knows? Perhaps you were right."

MRS. SOMERS: "About what?"

CAMPBELL: "My being a bore."

MRS. SOMERS: "I should think *you* would know."

CAMPBELL: "No; that's the difficulty. Nobody would be a bore if he knew it."

MRS. SOMERS: "Oh, *some* would, I think."

CAMPBELL: "Do you mean me?"

MRS. SOMERS: "Well, no, then. I don't believe you would be a bore if you knew it. Is that enough? or do you expect me to say something more?"

CAMPBELL: "No; it's quite enough, thank you." He remains pensively silent.

MRS. SOMERS, after waiting for him to speak: "Bores for bores, don't you hate the silent ones most?"

CAMPBELL, desperately rousing himself: "Mrs. Somers, if you only knew how disagreeable I was going to make myself just before I concluded to hold my tongue!"

MRS. SOMERS: "Really? What were you going to say?"

CAMPBELL: "Do you actually wish to know?"

MRS. SOMERS: "Oh no; I only thought you wished to tell."

CAMPBELL : "Not at all. You complained of my being silent."

MRS. SOMERS : "Did I? I was wrong. I will never do so again." She laughs in her fan.

CAMPBELL : "And I complain of your delay. You can tell me now, just as well as two weeks hence, whether you love me enough to marry me or not."

MRS. SOMERS : "You promised not to recur to that subject without some hint from me. You have broken your promise."

CAMPBELL : "Well, you wouldn't give me any hint."

MRS. SOMERS : "How can I believe you care for me if you are false in this?"

CAMPBELL : "It seems to me that my falsehood is another proof of my affection."

MRS. SOMERS : "Very well, then; you can wait till I know my mind."

CAMPBELL : "I'd rather know your heart. But I'll wait." After a pause : "Why do you carry a fan on a day like this? I ask, to make general conversation."

MRS. SOMERS, spreading the fan in her lap, and looking at it curiously : "I don't know." After a moment : "Oh yes; for the same reason that I shall have ice-cream after dinner to-day."

CAMPBELL : " That 's no reason at all." After a moment : " Are you going to have ice-cream to-day after dinner ? "

MRS. SOMERS : " I might. If I had company."

CAMPBELL : " Oh, I couldn't stay after hinting. I'm too proud for that." He pulls his chair nearer and joins her in examining the fan in her lap. " What is so very strange about your fan ? "

MRS. SOMERS : " Nothing. I was just seeing how a fan looked that was the subject of gratuitous criticism."

CAMPBELL : " I didn't criticise the *fan*." He regards it studiously.

MRS. SOMERS : " Oh ! *Not* the fan ? "

CAMPBELL : " No ; I think it's extremely pretty. I like big fans."

MRS. SOMERS : " So good of you ! It's Spanish. That's why it's so large."

CAMPBELL : " It's hand-painted too."

MRS. SOMERS, leaning back, and leaving him to the inspection of the fan : " You're a connoisseur, Mr. Campbell."

CAMPBELL : " Oh, I can tell hand-painting from machine-painting when I see it. 'Tisn't so good."

MRS. SOMERS : " Thank you."

CAMPBELL : " Not at all. Now, that

fellow—cavalier, I suppose, in Spain—making love in that attitude, you can see at a glance that *he's* hand-painted. No *machine*-painted cavalier would do it in that way. And look at the lady's hand. Who ever saw a hand of that size before?"

MRS. SOMERS, unclasping the hands which she had folded at her waist, and putting one of them out to take up the fan: "You said you were not criticising the fan."

CAMPBELL, quickly seizing the hand, with the fan in it: "Ah, I'm wrong! Here's another one no bigger. Let me see which is the largest."

MRS. SOMERS, struggling not very violently to free her hand: "Mr. Campbell!"

CAMPBELL: "Don't take it away! You must listen to me now, Amy."

MRS. SOMERS, rising abruptly, and dropping her fan as she comes forward to meet an elderly gentleman arriving from the landing: "Mr. Bemis! How very heroic of you to come such a day! Isn't it too bad?"

II

MR. BEMIS ; MRS. SOMERS ; MR. WILLIS
CAMPBELL

BEMIS : "Not if it makes me specially welcome, Mrs. Somers." Discovering

CAMPBELL : "Oh, Mr. Campbell !"

CAMPBELL, striving for his self-possession as they shake hands : "Yes, another hero, Mr. Bemis. Mrs. Somers is going to brevet everybody who comes to-day.—She didn't say heroes to me, but—"

MRS. SOMERS : "You shall have your tea at once, Mr. Bemis." She rings. "I was making Mr. Campbell wait for his. You don't order up the teapot for one hero."

BEMIS : "Ha, ha, ha ! No, indeed ! But I'm very glad you do for two. The fact is"—rubbing his hands—"I'm half frozen."

MRS. SOMERS : "Is it so very cold ?" To CAMPBELL, who presents her fan with a bow : "Oh, thank you." To MR. BEMIS : "Mr. Campbell has just been objecting to my fan. He doesn't like its being hand-painted, as he calls it."

BEMIS : "That reminds me of a California gentleman whom I found looking at an

Andrea del Sarto in the Pitti Palace at Florence one day—by the way *you've* been a Californian too, Mr. Campbell; but you won't mind. He seemed to be puzzled over it, and then he said to me—I was standing near him—'Hand-painted, I presume?'"

MRS. SOMERS: "Ah! ha, ha, ha! How very good!" To the maid, who appears: "The tea, Lizzie."

CAMPBELL: "You don't think he was joking?"

BEMIS, with misgiving: "Why, no, it never occurred to me that he was."

CAMPBELL: "You can't always tell when a Californian's joking."

MRS. SOMERS, with insinuation: "*Can't* you? Not even adoptive ones?"

CAMPBELL: "Adoptive ones never joke."

MRS. SOMERS: "Not even about hand-painted fans? What an interesting fact!" She sits down on the sofa behind the little table on which the maid arranges the tea, and pours out a cup. Then, with her eyes on MR. BEMIS: "Cream and sugar both? Yes?" Holding a cube of sugar in the tongs: "How many?"

BEMIS: "One, please."

MRS. SOMERS, handing it to him: "I'm so glad you take your tea *au naturel*, as *I* call it."

CAMPBELL: "What do you call it when they don't take it with cream and sugar?"

MRS. SOMERS: "*Au unnaturel*. There's only one thing worse—taking it with a slice of lemon in it. You might as well draw it from a bothersome samovar at once, and be done with it."

CAMPBELL: "The samovar is picturesque."

MRS. SOMERS: "It is insincere. Like Californians. Natives."

CAMPBELL: "Well, I can think of something much worse than tea with lemon in it."

MRS. SOMERS: "What?"

CAMPBELL: "No tea at all."

MRS. SOMERS, recollecting herself: "Oh, *poor* Mr. Campbell! Two lumps?"

CAMPBELL: "One, thank you. Your pity is so sweet!"

MRS. SOMERS: "You ought to have thought of the milk of human kindness, and spared my cream-jug too."

CAMPBELL: "You didn't pour out your compassion soon enough."

BEMIS, who has been sipping his tea in silent admiration: "Are you often able to keep it up in that way; I was fancying myself at the theatre."

MRS. SOMERS : " Oh, *don't* encore us ! Mr. Campbell would keep saying his things over indefinitely."

CAMPBELL, presenting his cup : " Another lump. It's turned bitter. *Two !*"

BEMIS : " Ha, ha, ha ! Very good—very good indeed !"

CAMPBELL : " Thank you kindly, Mr. Bemis."

MRS. SOMERS, greeting the new arrivals, and leaning forward to shake hands with them as they come up, without rising : " Mrs. Roberts ! How very good of you ! And Mr. Roberts !"

III

MR. AND MRS. ROBERTS AND THE OTHERS

ROBERTS : " Not at all."

MRS. ROBERTS : " Of course we were coming."

MRS. SOMERS : " Will you have some tea ? You see I'm installed already. Mr. Campbell was so greedy, he wouldn't wait."

CAMPBELL : " Mr. Bemis and I are here in the character of heroes, and we had to have our tea at once. You're a hero 'too,

Roberts, though you don't look it. Any one who comes to tea in such weather is a hero, or a—"

MRS. SOMERS, interrupting him with a little shriek: "Ugh! How hot that handle's getting!"

CAMPBELL: "Ah, I dare say. Let me turn out my sister's cup." Pouring out the tea and handing it to Mrs. Roberts. "I don't see how you could reconcile it to your No. Eleven conscience to leave your children in such a snowstorm as this, Agnes."

MRS. ROBERTS, in vague alarm: "Why, what in the world could happen to them, Willis?"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, nothing to *them*. But suppose Roberts got snowed under. Have some tea, Roberts?" He offers to pour out a cup.

MRS. SOMERS, dispossessing him of the teapot with dignity: "Thank you, Mr. Campbell; *I* will pour out the tea."

CAMPBELL: "Oh, very well. I thought the handle was hot."

MRS. SOMERS: "It's cooler now."

CAMPBELL: "And you won't let me help you?"

MRS. SOMERS: "When there are more people you may hand the tea."

CAMPBELL: "I wish I knew just how much that meant."

MRS. SOMERS: "Very little. As little as an adoptive Californian in his most earnest mood." While they talk—CAMPBELL bending over the teapot, on which MRS. SOMERS keeps her hand—the others form a little group apart.

BEMIS to MRS. ROBERTS: "I hope Mr. Roberts's distinguished friend won't give us the slip on account of the storm."

ROBERTS: "Oh no; he'll be sure to come. He may be late. But he's the most amiable of Englishmen, and I know he won't disappoint Mrs. Somers."

BEMIS: "The most unamiable of Englishmen couldn't do that."

ROBERTS: "Ah, I don't know. Did you meet Mr. Pogis?"

BEMIS: "No; what did he do?"

ROBERTS: "Why, he came—to the Hibbens's dinner—in a sack coat."

MRS. ROBERTS: "I thought it was a Cardigan jacket."

BEMIS: "I heard a Norfolk jacket and knickerbockers."

MRS. SOMERS: "Ah, there is Mrs. Curwen!" To CAMPBELL, aside: "And without her husband!"

CAMPBELL: "Or any one else's husband."

MRS. SOMERS: "For shame!"

CAMPBELL: "You began it."

MRS. SOMERS, to MRS. CURWEN, who approaches her sofa: "You are kindness itself, Mrs. Curwen, to come on such a day." The ladies press each other's hands.

IV

MRS. CURWEN AND THE OTHERS

MRS. CURWEN: "You are goodness in person, Mrs. Somers, to say so."

CAMPBELL: "And I am magnanimity embodied. Let me introduce myself, Mrs. Curwen!" He bows, and MRS. CURWEN deeply courtesies.

MRS. CURWEN: "I should never have known you."

CAMPBELL, melodramatically, to MRS. SOMERS: "Tea, ho! for Mrs. Curwen—impenetrably disguised as kindness."

MRS. CURWEN: "What shall I say to him?"

MRS. SOMERS, pouring the tea: "Anything you like, Mrs. Curwen. Aren't we to see Mr. Curwen to-day?"

MRS. CURWEN, taking her tea: "No, I'm

his insufficient apology. He's detained at his office—business."

CAMPBELL: "Then you see they don't *all* come, Mrs. Somers."

MRS. CURWEN: "All what?"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, all the—heroes."

MRS. CURWEN: "Is that what he was going to say, Mrs. Somers?"

MRS. SOMERS: "You never can tell what he's going to say."

MRS. CURWEN: "I should think you would be afraid of him."

MRS. SOMERS, with a little shrug: "Oh no; he's quite harmless. It's just a little way he has." To MR. and MRS. MILLER, MR. and MRS. ALFRED BEMIS, and DR. LAWTON, who all appear together: "Ah, how do you do? So glad to see you! So very kind of you! I didn't suppose *you* would venture out. And you too, Doctor?" She begins to pour out tea for them, one after another, with great zeal.

V

DR. LAWTON, MR. AND MRS. MILLER, YOUNG
MR. AND MRS. BEMIS, AND THE OTHERS

DR. LAWTON: "Yes, I too. It sounded very much as if I were Brutus also." He

stirs his tea and stares round at the company. "It seems to me that I have met these conspirators before. That's what makes Boston insupportable. You're always meeting the same people!"

CAMPBELL: "We all feel it as keenly as you do, Doctor."

LAWTON, looking sharply at him: "Oh! *you* here! I might have expected it. Where is your aunt?"

VI

MRS. CRASHAW AND THE OTHERS

MRS. CRASHAW, appearing: "If you mean me, Dr. Lawton—"

LAWTON: "I do, my dear friend. What company is complete without you?"

MRS. SOMERS, reaching forward to take her hand, while with her disengaged hand she begins to pour her a cup of tea: "None in *my* house."

MRS. CRASHAW: "Very pretty." Taking her tea. "I hope it isn't complete, either, without the English painter- you promised us."

MRS. SOMERS: "No, indeed! And a great many other people besides. But

haven't you met him yet? I supposed Mrs. Roberts—"

MRS. CRASHAW: "Oh, I don't go to *all* of Agnes's fandangoes. I was to have seen him at Mrs. Wheeler's—he is being asked everywhere, of course—but he didn't come. He sent his father and mother instead. They were very nice old people, but they hadn't painted his pictures."

LAWTON: "They might say his pictures would never have been painted without them."

BEMIS: "It was like Heine's going to visit Rachel by appointment. She wasn't in, but her father and mother were; and when he met her afterwards he told her that he had just come from a show where he had seen a curious monster advertised for exhibition—the offspring of a hare and a salmon. The monster was not to be seen at the moment, but the showman said here was monsieur the hare and madam the salmon."

MRS. ROBERTS: "What in the world did Rachel say?"

LAWTON: "Ah, that's what these brilliant anecdotes never tell. And I think it would be very interesting to know what the victim of a witticism has to say."

MRS. CURWEN: "I should think you would know very often, Doctor."

LAWTON: "Ah, now I should like to know what the victim of a compliment says!"

MRS. CURWEN: "He bows his thanks."
DR. LAWTON makes a profound obeisance, to which MRS. CURWEN responds in burlesque.

MILLER: "We all envy you, Doctor."

MRS. MILLER: "Oh yes. Mrs. Curwen never makes a compliment without meaning it."

MRS. CURWEN: "I can't say that quite, my dear. I should be very sorry to mean all the civil things I say. But I never flatter gentlemen of a certain age."

MRS. MILLER, tittering ineffectively: "I shall know what to say to Mr. Miller after this."

MRS. CRASHAW: "Well, if you haven't got the man, Mrs. Somers, you *have* got his picture, haven't you?"

MRS. SOMERS: "Yes; it's on my writing-desk in the library. Let me—"

LAWTON: "No, no; don't disturb yourself! We wish to tear it to pieces without your embarrassing presence. Will you take my arm, Mrs. Crashaw?"

MRS. BEMIS: "Oh, let us all go and see it!"

ROBERTS : "Aren't you coming, Willis?"

CAMPBELL, without looking round :
"Thank you, I've seen it."

MRS. SOMERS, whom the withdrawal of her other guests has left alone with him : "How could you tell such a fib?"

CAMPBELL : "I could tell much worse fibs than that in such a cause."

MRS. SOMERS : "What cause?"

CAMPBELL : "A lost one, I'm afraid. Will you answer my question, Amy?"

MRS. SOMERS : "Did you ask me any?"

CAMPBELL : "You know I did—before those people came in."

MRS. SOMERS : "Oh, *that*! Yes. I should like to ask *you* a question first."

CAMPBELL : "Twenty, if you like."

MRS. SOMERS : "Why do you feel authorised to call me by my first name?"

CAMPBELL : "Because I love you. Now will you answer me?"

MRS. SOMERS, dreamily : "I didn't say I would, did I?"

CAMPBELL, rising sadly : "No."

MRS. SOMERS, mechanically taking the hand he offers her : "Oh! What—"

CAMPBELL : "I'm going; that's all."

MRS. SOMERS : "So soon?"

CAMPBELL : "Yes; but I'll try to make

amends by not coming back soon—or at all.”

MRS. SOMERS: “You mustn’t.”

CAMPBELL: “Mustn’t what?”

MRS. SOMERS: “You mustn’t keep my hand. Here come some more people. Ah, Mrs. Canfield! Miss Bayly! So very nice of you, Mrs. Wharton! Will you have some tea?”

VII

MR. CAMPBELL, MISS BAYLY, MRS. WHARTON,
AND THE OTHERS

MRS. WHARTON: “No, thank you. The only objection to afternoon tea is the tea.”

MRS. SOMERS: “I’m so glad you don’t mind the weather.” With her hand on the teapot, glancing up at MISS BAYLY: “And do you refuse too?”

MISS BAYLY: “I can answer for Mrs. Canfield that *she* doesn’t, and I *never* do. *We* object to the weather.”

MRS. SOMERS, pouring a cup of tea: “That makes it a little more difficult. I can keep from offering Mrs. Wharton some tea, but I can’t stop it snowing.”

MISS BAYLY, taking her cup: “But

you're so amiable: we know you would if you could, and that's quite enough. We're not the first and only, are we?"

MRS. SOMERS: "*Dear*, no! There are multitudes of flattering spirits in the library, stopping the mouth of my portrait with pretty speeches."

MISS BAYLY, vividly: "Not your *Bramford* portrait?"

MRS. SOMERS: "My *Bramford* portrait."

MISS BAYLY to the other ladies: "Oh, let us go and see it too!" They flutter out of the drawing-room, where MRS. SOMERS and CAMPBELL remain alone together as before. He continues silent, while she waits for him to speak.

VIII

MRS. SOMERS ; MR. CAMPBELL

MRS. SOMERS, finally: "Well?"

CAMPBELL: "Well, what?"

MRS. SOMERS: "Nothing. Only I thought you were—you were going to—"

CAMPBELL: "No; I've got nothing to say."

MRS. SOMERS: "I didn't mean that. I thought you were going to—go." She puts

up her hand and hides a triumphant little smile with it.

CAMPBELL: "Very well, then, I'll go, since you wish it." He holds out his hand.

MRS. SOMERS, putting hers behind her: "You've shaken hands once. Besides, who said I wished you to go?"

CAMPBELL: "Do you wish me to stay?"

MRS. SOMERS: "I wish you to—hand tea to people."

CAMPBELL: "And you won't say anything more?"

MRS. SOMERS: "It seems to me that's enough."

CAMPBELL: "It isn't enough for me. But I suppose beggars mustn't be choosers. I can't stay merely to hand tea to people, however. You can say yes or no now, Amy, as well as any other time."

MRS. SOMERS: "Well, no, then—if you wish it so much."

CAMPBELL: "You know I don't wish it."

MRS. SOMERS: "You gave me my choice. I thought you were indifferent about the word."

CAMPBELL: "You know better than that, Amy."

MRS. SOMERS: "Amy again! Aren't you a little previous, Mr. Campbell?"

CAMPBELL, with a sigh : " Ah, that's for you to say."

MRS. SOMERS : " Wouldn't it be impolite ? "

CAMPBELL : " Oh, not for *you*."

MRS. SOMERS : " If you're so sarcastic, I shall be afraid of you."

CAMPBELL : " Under what circumstances ? "

MRS. SOMERS, dropping her eyes : " I don't know." He makes a rush upon her. " Oh ! here comes Mrs. Curwen ! Shake hands as if you were going."

IX

MRS. CURWEN ; MRS. SOMERS ; MR. CAMPBELL

MRS. CURWEN : " What ! is Mr. Campbell going *too* ? "

MRS. SOMERS : " Too ? *You're* not going, Mrs. Curwen ? "

MRS. CURWEN : " Yes, I'm going. The likeness is perfect, Mrs. Somers. It's a speaking likeness, if there ever was one."

CAMPBELL : " Did it do all the talking ? "

MRS. CURWEN : " It would — if Mrs. Roberts and Dr. Lawton hadn't been there. Well, I must go."

CAMPBELL: "So must I."

MRS. SOMERS, in surprise: "*Must* you?"

CAMPBELL: "Yes; these drifts will be over my ears directly."

MRS. CURWEN: "You poor man! You don't mean to say you're *walking*?"

CAMPBELL: "I shall be, in about half a minute."

MRS. CURWEN: "Indeed you shall not! You shall be driving—with me. I've a vacancy in the coupé, and I'll set you down wherever you like."

CAMPBELL: "Won't it crowd you?"

MRS. CURWEN: "Not at all."

CAMPBELL: "Or incommode you in any way?"

MRS. CURWEN: "It will oblige me in every way."

CAMPBELL: "Then I will go, and a thousand thanks. Good-bye again, Mrs. Somers."

MRS. CURWEN: "Good-bye, Mrs. Somers. Poor Mrs. Somers! It seems too bad to leave you here alone, bowed in an elegiac attitude over your tea-urn."

MRS. SOMERS: "Oh, not at all! Remember me to *Mr.* Curwen."

MRS. CURWEN: "I will. Well, Mr. Campbell—"

MRS. SOMERS : "Mr. Campbell—"

CAMPBELL : "Well?"

MRS. CURWEN : "To which?"

CAMPBELL : "Both."

MRS. SOMERS : "Neither!"

MRS. CURWEN : "Ah! ha, ha, ha! Mr. Campbell, do you know much about women?"

CAMPBELL : "I had a mother."

MRS. CURWEN : "Oh, a *mother* won't do."

CAMPBELL : "Well, I have an only sister who is a woman."

MRS. CURWEN : "A sister won't do *either*—not your own. You can't learn a woman's meaning in that way."

CAMPBELL : "I will sit at your feet, Mrs. Curwen, if you'll instruct me."

MRS. CURWEN : "I shall be delighted. I'll begin now. Oh, you needn't really prostrate yourself!" She stops him in a burlesque attempt to do so. "And I'll concentrate the wisdom of the whole first lesson in a single word."

CAMPBELL, with clasped hands of entreaty : "Speak, blessed ghost!"

MRS. CURWEN : "Stay! Ah! ha, ha, ha!" She flies at MRS. SOMERS and kisses her. "You can't say I'm ill-natured, my dear, whatever I am!"

MRS. SOMERS, pursuing her exit with the word: "No, merely atrocious." A pause ensues, in which CAMPBELL stands irresolute.

X

MRS. SOMERS ; MR. CAMPBELL

CAMPBELL, finally: "Did you wish me to stay, Amy?"

MRS. SOMERS, airily: "I? Oh no! It was Mrs. Curwen."

CAMPBELL: "Then I think I'll accept her kind offer of a seat in her coupé."

MRS. SOMERS: "Oh! I thought, of course, you'd stay—at *her* request."

CAMPBELL: "No; I shall only stay at yours."

MRS. SOMERS: "And I shall not ask you. In fact, I warn you not to."

CAMPBELL: "Why?"

MRS. SOMERS: "Because, if you urge me to speak now, I shall say—"

CAMPBELL: "I wasn't going to urge you."

MRS. SOMERS: "No matter! I shall say it now without being urged. Yes, I've made up my mind. I can't marry a flirt."

CAMPBELL: "I can, Amy."

MRS. SOMERS: "Sir!"

CAMPBELL: "You know very well you sent those people into the other room to keep me here and torment me—"

MRS. SOMERS: "Now you've *insulted* me, and all *is* over."

CAMPBELL: "To tantalise me with your loveliness, your beauty, your grace, Amy!"

MRS. SOMERS, softening: "Oh, that's all very well—"

CAMPBELL: "I'm glad you like it. I could go on at much greater length. But you know I love you dearly, Amy, and why should you delight in my agonies? But only marry me, and you shall delight in them as long as you live, and—"

MRS. SOMERS: "You must hold me very cheap to think I would take you from that creature."

CAMPBELL: "Confound her! I wasn't hers to give. I offered myself first."

MRS. SOMERS: "She offered you last, and—no, thank you, please."

CAMPBELL: "Do you really mean it?"

MRS. SOMERS: "I shall not say. Or, yes, I *will* say. If that woman, who seems to have you at her beck and call, had not intermeddled, I might have made you a

very different answer. But now my eyes are opened, and I see what I should have to expect, and—no, thank you, please.”

CAMPBELL: “And if she hadn’t offered me—”

MRS. SOMERS, drawing out her handkerchief and putting it to her eyes: “I was feeling kindly towards you—I was such a little fool—”

CAMPBELL: “Amy!”

MRS. SOMERS: “And you knew how much I disliked her.”

CAMPBELL: “Yes, I saw by the way you kissed each other.”

MRS. SOMERS: “Nonsense! You knew that meant nothing. But if it had been anybody else in the world but her, I shouldn’t have minded it. And now—”

CAMPBELL: “Now—”

MRS. SOMERS: “Now all those geese are coming back from the other room, and they’ll see that I’ve been crying, and everybody will know everything. Willis—”

CAMPBELL: “*Willis?*”

MRS. SOMERS: “Let me go! I must bathe my eyes! You stay here and receive them! I’ll be back at once!” She escapes from the arms stretched towards her, and out of the door, just before her guests enter from

the library, and CAMPBELL remains to receive them. The ladies, in returning, call over one another's heads and shoulders.

XI

MR. CAMPBELL AND THE OTHERS

MRS. ROBERTS: "Amy, it's *lovely*! But it doesn't *half* do you justice."

YOUNG MRS. BEMIS: "It's too sweet for *anything*, Mrs. Somers."

MRS. CRASHAW: "Why did you let the man put you into that ridiculous seventeenth-century dress? Can't he paint a modern frock?"

MRS. WHARTON: "But what exquisite colouring, Mrs. Somers!"

MRS. MILLER: "He's got just your lovely turn of the head."

MISS BAYLY: "And the way you hold your fan—what character he's thrown into it!"

MRS. ROBERTS: "And that fall of the skirt, Amy; that skirt is *full* of character!" She discovers MR. CAMPBELL behind the tea-urn. He has MRS. SOMERS'S light wrap on his shoulders, and her fan in his hand, and

he alternately hides his blushes with it, and coquettishly folds and pats his mouth in a gross caricature of MRS. SOMERS'S manner. In rising he twitches his coat forward in a similar burlesque of a lady's management of her skirt. "Why, where is Amy, Willis?"

CAMPBELL: "Gone a moment. Some trouble about—the hot water."

LAWTON: "Hot water that you've been getting into? Ah, young man; look me in the eye!"

CAMPBELL: "Your glass one, Doctor?"

YOUNG MR. BEMIS: "Why, my dear, has your father got a glass eye?"

MRS. BEMIS: "Of *course* he hasn't! What an idea! I don't know what Mr. Campbell means."

LAWTON: "I've no doubt he wishes I had a glass eye—two of them, for that matter. But that isn't answering my question. Where is Mrs. Somers?"

CAMPBELL: "That was my sister's question, and I did answer it. Have some tea, ladies? I'm glad you like my portrait, and that you think he's got my lovely turn of the head, and the way I hold my fan, and the character of my skirt; but I agree with you that it isn't half as pretty as I am."

THE LADIES: "Oh, what shall we do to him? Prescribe for us, Doctor."

CAMPBELL: "No, no! I want the Doctor's services myself. I don't want him to give me his medicines. I want him to give me away."

LAWTON: "You're tired of giving yourself away, then?"

CAMPBELL: "It's of no use. They won't have me."

LAWTON: "Who won't?"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, I'll leave Mrs. Somers to say."

XII

MRS. SOMERS AND THE OTHERS

MRS. SOMERS, radiantly reappearing: "Say what?" She has hidden the traces of her tears from every one but the ladies by a light application of powder, and she knows that they all know she has been crying, and this makes her a little more smiling. "Say what?" She addresses the company in general rather than CAMPBELL.

CAMPBELL, with caricatured tenderness: "Say yes."

MRS. SOMERS: "What does he mean, Doctor?"

LAWTON: "Oh, I'm afraid he's past all surgery. I give him over to you, Mrs. Somers."

CAMPBELL: "There now. She wasn't the last to do it!"

MRS. SOMERS, with the resolution of a widow: "Well, I suppose there's nothing else for it, then. I'll see what can be done for your patient, Doctor." She passes her hand through CAMPBELL'S arm, where he continues to stand behind the tea-table.

MRS. ROBERTS, falling upon her and kissing her: "Amy, you don't *mean* it!"

MRS. BEMIS, embracing her in turn: "I never can believe it."

MRS. CRASHAW: "It is ridiculous! What, Willis?"

MRS. MILLER: "It does seem too nice to be true."

BEMIS: "You astonish us!"

ROBERTS: "We never should have dreamed of it."

YOUNG MR. BEMIS: "You *must* give us time to realise it."

MRS. WHARTON: "Is it *possible*?"

MISS BAYLY: "Is it possible?" They all shake hands with Mrs. Somers in turn.

ROBERTS: "Isn't this rather sudden, Willis?"

CAMPBELL: "Well, it is—for Mrs. Somers perhaps. But *I've* found it awfully gradual."

MRS. SOMERS: "Nonsense! It's an old story for both of us."

CAMPBELL: "Well, what I like about it is, it's *true*. Founded on fact!"

MRS. ROBERTS: "I *can't* believe it!"

CAMPBELL: "Well, I don't know whom all this charming incredulity's intended to flatter; but if it's I, I say no, *not* really, at all! It's merely a little *coup de théâtre* we've been arranging."

LAWTON, patting him on the shoulder: "One ahead, as usual."

MRS. SOMERS: "Oh, thank you, Doctor! There are two of us ahead now."

LAWTON: "*I* believe you, at any rate. Bravo!" He initiates an applause in which all the rest join, while CAMPBELL catches up MRS. SOMERS'S fan and unfurls it before both their faces.

A LIKELY STORY

I

MR. AND MRS. WILLIS CAMPBELL

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Now this, I think, is the most exciting part of the whole affair, and the pleasantest." She is seated at breakfast in her cottage at Summering-by-the-Sea. A heap of letters of various stylish shapes, colours, and superscriptions lies beside her plate, and irregularly straggles about among the coffee service. Vis-à-vis with her sits MR. CAMPBELL behind a newspaper. "How prompt they are! Why, I didn't expect to get half so many answers yet. But that shows that where people have nothing to do *but* attend to their social duties they are always prompt—even the men; women, of course, reply early anyway, and you don't really care for them; but in town the men seem to put it off till the very last moment, and then some of them call when it's over to excuse themselves

for not having come after accepting. It really makes you wish for a leisure class. It's only the drive and hurry of American life that makes our men seem wanting in the *convenances*; and if they had the time, with their instinctive delicacy, they would be perfect: it would come from the heart: they're more truly polite now. Willis, just *look* at this!"

CAMPBELL, behind his paper: "Look at what?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "These replies. Why, I do believe that more than half the people have answered already, and the invitations only went out yesterday. That comes from putting on R. S. V. P. I knew I was right, and I shall always do it, I don't care what *you* say."

CAMPBELL: "You didn't put on R. S. V. P. after all I said?" He looks round the edge of his paper at her.

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Yes, I did. The idea of your setting up for an authority in such a thing as that!"

CAMPBELL: "Then I'm sorry I didn't ask you to do it. It's a shame to make people say whether they'll come to a garden-party from four till seven or not."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "A shame? How can

you provide if you don't know how many are coming? I should like to know that. But of course I couldn't expect you to give in gracefully."

CAMPBELL: "I should give in gracefully if I gave in at all, but I don't." He throws his paper down beside his chair. "Here, hand over the letters, and I'll be opening them for you while you pour out the coffee."

MRS. CAMPBELL, covering the letters with her hands: "Indeed you won't!"

CAMPBELL: "Well, pour out the coffee, then, anyway."

MRS. CAMPBELL, after a moment's reflection: "No, I shall not do it. I'm going to open them every one before you get a drop of coffee—just to punish you."

CAMPBELL: "To punish me? For what?"

MRS. CAMPBELL hesitates, as if at a loss what to say. "There! you don't know."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Yes I do: for saying I oughtn't to have put on R. S. V. P. Do you take it back?"

CAMPBELL: "How can I till I've had some coffee? My mind won't work on an empty stomach. Well—" He rises and goes round the table towards her.

MRS. CAMPBELL, spreading both arms over the letters: "Willis, if you dare to touch

them, I'll ring for Jane, and then she'll see you cutting up."

CAMPBELL: "Touch what? I'm coming to get some coffee."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Well, I'll give you some coffee; but don't you touch a single one of those letters—after what you've said."

CAMPBELL: "All right!" He extends one hand for the coffee, and with the other sweeps all the letters together, and starts back to his place. As she flies upon him, "Look out, Amy; you'll make me spill this coffee all over the tablecloth."

MRS. CAMPBELL, sinking into her seat: "O Willis, how can you be so base? *Give me my letters. Do!*"

CAMPBELL, sorting them over: "You may have half."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "No; I shall have all. I insist upon it."

CAMPBELL: "Well, then, you may have all the ladies' letters. There are twice as many of them."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "No; I shall have the men's too. Give me the men's first."

CAMPBELL: "How can I tell which are the men's without opening them?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "How could you tell

which were the ladies' ? Come now, Willis, don't tease me any longer. You know I hate it."

CAMPBELL, studying the superscriptions, one after another: "I want to see if I can guess who wrote them. Don't you like to guess who wrote your letters before you open them?"

MRS. CAMPBELL, with dignity: "I don't like to guess who wrote other people's letters." She looks down at the tablecloth with a menace of tears, and CAMPBELL instantly returns all the notes.

CAMPBELL: "There, Amy, you may have them. I don't care who wrote them, nor what's in them. And I don't want you to interrupt me with any exclamations over them, if you please." He reaches to the floor for his newspaper, and while he sips his coffee, MRS. CAMPBELL loses no time in opening her letters.

MRS. CAMPBELL: "I shall do nothing *but* exclaim. The Curwens accept, of course—the very first letter. That means Mrs. Curwen; that is one, at any rate. The New York Addingses do, and the Philadelphia Addingses don't; I hardly expected they would, so soon after their aunt's death, but I thought I ought to ask them. Mr. and

Mrs. Roberts, naturally ; it was more a joke than anything, sending their invitation. Mrs. and the Misses Carver regret very much ; well, *I* don't. Professor and Mrs. Traine are very happy, and so am I ; he doesn't go everywhere, and he's awfully nice. Mr. and Mrs. Lou Bemis are very happy too, and Dr. Lawton is very happy. Mrs. Bridges Dear Mrs. Campbells me, and is very sorry in the first person ; she's always nice. Mr. Phillips, Mr. Rangeley, Mr. Small, Mr. Peters, Mr. Staples, Mr. Thornton, *all* accept, and they're all charming young fellows."

CAMPBELL, around his paper : " Well, what of that ? "

MRS. CAMPBELL, with an air of busy preoccupation : " Don't eavesdrop, please ; I wasn't talking to you. The Merrills have the pleasure, and the Morgans are sorrow-stricken ; the—"

CAMPBELL : " Yes, but why should you care whether those fellows are charming or not ? Who's going to marry them ? "

MRS. CAMPBELL : " *I* am. Mrs. Stevenson is bowed to the earth ; Colonel Murphree is overjoyed ; the Misses Ja—"

CAMPBELL, putting his paper down : " Look here, Amy. Do you know that you

have one little infinitesimal ewe-lamb of a foible? You think too much of young men."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "*Younger* men, you mean. And *you* have a multitude of perfectly mammoth peccadilloes. You interrupt." She goes on opening and reading her letters. "Well, I didn't expect the Macklines *could*; but everybody seems to be coming."

CAMPBELL: "You pay them too much attention altogether. It spoils them; and one of these days you'll be getting some of them in love with you, and *then* what will you do?"

MRS. CAMPBELL, with affected distraction: "What *are* you talking about? I'd refer them to you, and you could kill them. I suppose you killed lots of people in California. That's what you always gave me to understand." She goes on with her letters.

CAMPBELL: "I never killed a single human being that I can remember; but there's no telling what I might do if I were provoked. Now, there's that young Welling. He's about here under my feet all the time; and he's got a way lately of coming in through the window from the

piazza that's very intimate. He's a nice fellow enough, and sweet, as you say. I suppose he has talent too, but I never heard that he had set any of the adjacent water-courses on fire; and I don't know that he could give the Apollo Belvedere many points in beauty and beat him."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "*I do.* Mr. and Miss Rice accept, and her friend Miss Greenway, who's staying with her, and—yes! here's one from Mr. Welling! *Oh*, how glad I am! Willis, dearest, if I *could* be the means of bringing those two lovely young creatures together, I should be *so* happy! *Don't* you think, now, he *is* the most delicate-minded, truly refined, exquisitely modest young fellow that ever was?" She presses the unopened note to her corsage, and leans eagerly forward entreating a sympathetic acquiescence.

CAMPBELL: "Well, as far as I can remember my own youth, no. But what does he say?"

MRS. CAMPBELL, regarding the letter: "I haven't looked yet. He writes the *most* characteristic hand, for a man, that I ever saw. And he has the divinest taste in perfumes! Oh, I wonder what *that* is? Like a memory—a regret." She presses it

repeatedly to her pretty nose, in the endeavour to ascertain.

CAMPBELL: "Oh, hello!"

MRS. CAMPBELL, laughing: "Willis, you *are* delightful. I should like to see you really jealous once."

CAMPBELL: "You won't, as long as I know my own incomparable charm. But give me that letter, Amy, if you're not going to open it. . I want to see whether Welling is going to come."

MRS. CAMPBELL, fondly: "Would you *really* like to open it? I've half a mind to let you, just for a reward."

CAMPBELL: "Reward! What for?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Oh, I don't know. Being so nice."

CAMPBELL: "That's something I can't help. It's no merit. Well, hand over the letter."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "I should have thought you'd insist on *my* opening it, after that."

CAMPBELL: "Why?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "To show your confidence."

CAMPBELL: "When I haven't got any?"

MRS. CAMPBELL, tearing the note open: "Well, it's no use trying any sentiment with you, or any generosity either. You're

always just the same ; a teasing joke is your ideal. You can't imagine a woman's wanting to keep up a little romance all through ; and a character like Mr. Welling's, who's all chivalry and delicacy and deference, is quite beyond you. That 's the reason you 're always sneering at him."

CAMPBELL : " I 'm not sneering at him, my dear. I 'm only afraid Miss Rice isn't good enough for him."

MRS. CAMPBELL, instantly placated : " Well, she 's the only girl who 's anywhere near it. I don't say she 's faultless, but she has a great deal of character, and she 's very practical ; just the counterpart of his dreaminess ; and she is very, *very* good-looking, don't you think ? "

CAMPBELL : " Her bang isn't so nice as his."

MRS. CAMPBELL : " No ; and aren't his eyes beautiful ? And that high, serious look ! And his nose and chin are perfectly divine. He looks like a young god ! "

CAMPBELL : " I dare say ; though I never saw an old one. Well, is he coming ? I 'm not jealous, but I 'm impatient. Read it out loud."

MRS. CAMPBELL, sinking back in her chair for the more luxurious perusal of the note :

"Indeed I shall not." She opens it and runs it hastily through, with various little starts, stares, frowns, smiles of arrested development, laughs, and cries: "Why—why! What does it mean? Is he crazy? Why, there's some mistake. No! It's his hand—and here's his name. I can't make it out." She reads it again and again. "Why, it's perfectly bewildering! Why, there must be some mistake. He couldn't have meant it. Could he have imagined? Could he have dared? There never has been the slightest thing that could have been tortured into— But of course not. And Mr. Welling, of all men! Oh, I can't understand it! O Willis, Willis, Willis! What *does* it mean!" She flings the note wildly across the table, and catching her handkerchief to her face, falls back into her chair, tumultuously sobbing.

CAMPBELL, with the calm of a man accustomed to emotional superabundance, lifting the note from the toast-rack before him: "Well, let's see." He reads aloud: "'O my darling! How can I live till I see you? I will be there long *before* the hour! To think of your *asking* me! You should have said, 'I permit you to come,' and I would have flown from the ends of the

earth. The presence of others will be nothing. It will be sweet to ignore them in my heart, and while I see you moving among them, and looking after their pleasure with that beautiful thoughtfulness of yours, to think, "she is mine, mine, mine!"

"O young lord lover, what sighs are those
For one that can never be thine!"

I thank you, and thank you a thousand times over, for this proof of your trust in me, and of your love—*our* love. You shall be the sole keeper of our secret—it is so sweet to think that no one even suspects it!—and it shall live with you, and if you will, it shall die with me. For ever yours, Arthur Welling."

CAMPBELL turns the note over, and picking up the envelope, examines the address. "Well, *upon* my word! It's to you, Amy—on the outside, anyway. What do you suppose he means?"

MRS. CAMPBELL, in her handkerchief: "Oh, I don't know: I *don't* know why he should address such language to me!"

CAMPBELL, recurring to the letter: "*I never did. 'O my darling—live till I see you—ends of the earth—others will be nothing—beautiful thoughtfulness,—mine, mine, mine—our love—sweet to think no one suspects it—for ever yours.'* Amy, these are pretty

strong expressions to use towards the wife of another, and she a married lady ! I think I had better go and solve that little problem of how he can live till he sees you by relieving him of the necessity. It would be disagreeable to him, but perhaps there's a social duty involved."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "O Willis, *don't* torment me ! What do you suppose it means ? Is it some—mistake ? It's for somebody else !"

CAMPBELL: "I don't see why he should have addressed it to you, then."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "But don't you see ? He's been writing to some other person at the same time, and he's got the answers mixed—put them in the wrong envelopes. Oh dear ! I wonder who she is !"

CAMPBELL, studying her with an air of affected abstraction: "Her curiosity gets the better of her anguish. Look here, Amy ! I believe you're *afraid* it's to some one else."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Willis !"

CAMPBELL: "Yes. And before we proceed any further, I must know just what you wrote to this—this Mr. Welling of yours. Did you put on R. S. V. P. ?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Yes ; and just a

printed card like all the rest. I did want to write him a note in the first person, and urge him to come, because I expected Miss Rice and Miss Greenway to help me receive ; but when I found Margaret had promised Mrs. Curwen for the next day, I knew she wouldn't like to take the bloom off that by helping me first ; so I didn't."

CAMPBELL : " Didn't what ? "

MRS. CAMPBELL : " Write to him. I just sent a card. "

CAMPBELL : " Then these passionate expressions *are* unprovoked, and my duty is clear. I must lose no time in destroying Mr. Welling. Do you happen to know where I laid my revolver ? "

MRS. CAMPBELL : " O Willis, what are you going to do ? You see it's a mistake. "

CAMPBELL : " Mr. Welling has got to prove that. I'm not going to have young men addressing my wife as O their darling, without knowing the reason why. It's a liberty. "

MRS. CAMPBELL, inclined to laugh : " Ah, Willis, how funny you are ! "

CAMPBELL : " Funny ? I'm furious. "

MRS. CAMPBELL : " You know you're not. Give me the letter, dearest. I know it's for Margaret Rice, and I shall see her, and

just feel round and find out if it isn't so, and—"

CAMPBELL: "What an idea! You haven't the slightest evidence that it's for Miss Rice, or that it isn't intended for you, and it's my duty to find out. And nobody is authority but Mr. Welling. And I'm going to him with the *corpus delicti*."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "But how can you? Remember how sensitive, how shrinking he is. Don't, Willis; you mustn't. It will kill him!"

CAMPBELL: "Well, that may save me considerable bother. If he will simply die of himself, I can't ask anything better." He goes on eating his breakfast.

MRS. CAMPBELL, admiring him across the table: "O Willis, how perfectly delightful you are!"

CAMPBELL: "I know; but why?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Why, taking it in the nice, sensible way you do. Now, some husbands would be so stupid! Of course you *couldn't* think—you couldn't *dream*—that the letter was really for me; and yet you might behave very disagreeably, and make me very unhappy, if you were not just the lovely, kind-hearted, magnanimous—"

CAMPBELL, looking up from his coffee :
“ Oh, hello ! ”

MRS. CAMPBELL : “ Yes ; that is what took my fancy in you, Willis : that generosity, that real gentleness, in spite of the brusque way you have. Refinement of the heart, I call it.”

CAMPBELL : “ Amy, what are you after ? ”

MRS. CAMPBELL : “ We ’ve been married a whole year now— ”

CAMPBELL : “ Longer, isn’t it ? ”

MRS. CAMPBELL : “ —and I haven’t known you do an unkind thing, a brutal thing.”

CAMPBELL : “ Well, I understand the banging around hardly ever begins much under two years.”

MRS. CAMPBELL : “ How *sweet* you are ! And you ’re so funny always ! ”

CAMPBELL : “ Come, come, Amy ; get down to business. What is it you do want ? ”

MRS. CAMPBELL : “ You won’t go and tease that poor boy about his letter, will you ? Just hand it to him, and say you suppose here is something that has come into your possession by mistake, and that you wish to restore it to him, and then— just run off.”

CAMPBELL: "With my parasol in one hand, and my skirts caught up in the other?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Oh, how good! Of course I was imagining how *I* should do it."

CAMPBELL: "Well, a man can't do it that way. He would look silly." He rises from the table, and comes and puts his arm round her shoulders. "But you needn't be afraid of my being rough with him. Of course it's a mistake; but he's a fellow who will enter into the joke too; he'll enjoy it; he'll—" He merges his sentence in a kiss on her upturned lips, and she clings to his hand with her right, pressing it fondly to her cheek. "I shall do it in a man's way; but I guess you'll approve of it quite as much."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "I know I shall. That's what I like about you, Willis: your being so helplessly a man always."

CAMPBELL: "Well, that's what attracted me to you, Amy: your manliness."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "And I liked your *finesse*. You are awfully inventive, Willis. Why, Willis, I've just thought of something. Oh, it would be so good if you only would!"

CAMPBELL : "Would what?"

MRS. CAMPBELL : "Invent something now to get us out of the scrape."

CAMPBELL : "What a brilliant idea ! *I'm* not in any scrape. And as for Mr. Welling, I don't see how you could help him out unless you sent this letter to Miss Rice, and asked her to send yours back—"

MRS. CAMPBELL, springing to her feet : "Willis, you are inspired ! Oh, how perfectly delightful ! And it's so delicate of you to think of that ! I will just enclose his note—give it here, Willis—and he need never know that it ever went to the wrong address. Oh, I always felt that you were *truly* refined, anyway." He passively yields the letter, and she whirls away to a writing-desk in the corner of the room. "Now: I'll just keep a copy of the letter—for a joke ; I think I've a perfect right to"—scribbling furiously away—"and then I'll match the paper with an envelope—I can do that perfectly—and then I'll just imitate his hand—such fun!—and send it flying over to Margaret Rice. Oh, *how* good ! Touch the bell, Willis"; and then—as the serving-maid appears—"Yes, Jane ! Run right across the lawn to Mrs. Rice's and give this letter for Miss Margaret, and say it was left here

by mistake. Well, it *was*, Willis. Fly, Jane! O Willis, love! Isn't it perfect! Of course she'll have got his formal reply to my invitation, and be all mixed up by it, and now when this note comes, she'll see through it all in an instant, and it will be such a relief to her; and oh, she'll think that he's directed *both* the letters to her because he couldn't think of any one else! Isn't it lovely? Just like anything that's nice, it's ten times as nice as you expected it to be; and—"

CAMPBELL: "But hold on, Amy!" He lifts a note from the desk. "You've sent your copy. Here's the original now. She'll think you've been playing some joke on her."

MRS. CAMPBELL, clutching the letter from him, and scanning it in a daze: "*What!* Oh, my goodness! It is! I have! Oh, I shall die! Run! Call her back! Shriek, Willis!" They rush to the window together. "No, no! It's too late! She's given it to their man, and now nothing can save me! O Willis! Willis! Willis! This is all your fault, with that fatal suggestion of yours. Oh, if you had only left it to me, I never should have got into such a scrape! She will think now that I've

been trying to hoax her, and she's perfectly implacable at the least hint of a liberty, and she'll be ready to kill me. I don't know *what* she won't do. O Willis, how *could* you get me into this !”

CAMPBELL, irately : “Get you into this ! Now, Amy, this is a little too much. You got yourself into it. You urged me to think of something—”

MRS. CAMPBELL : “Well, do, Willis, *do* think of something, or I shall go mad ! Help me, Willis ! Don't be so heartless—so unfeeling.”

CAMPBELL : “There's only one thing now, and that is to make a clean breast of it to Welling, and get him to help us out. A word from him can make everything right, and we can't take a step without him ; we can't move !”

MRS. CAMPBELL : “I can't let you. Oh, isn't it horrible !”

CAMPBELL : “Yes ; a nice thing is always ten times nicer than you expected it to be !”

MRS. CAMPBELL : “Oh, how can you stand there mocking me ? Why don't you go to him at once, and tell him the whole thing, and beg him, implore him to help us ?”

CAMPBELL: "Why, you just told me I mustn't!"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "You didn't expect me to say you might, did you? Oh, how cruel!" She whirls out of the room, and CAMPBELL stands in a daze, in which he is finally aware of MR. ARTHUR WELLING, seen through the open window, on the verandah without. MR. WELLING with a terrified and furtive air, seems to be fixed to the spot where he stands.

II

MR. WELLING ; MR. CAMPBELL

CAMPBELL: "Why, Welling, what the devil are you doing there?"

WELLING: "Trying to get away."

CAMPBELL: "To get away? But you shan't, man! I won't let you. I was just going to see you. How long have you been there?"

WELLING: "I've just come."

CAMPBELL: "What have you heard?"

WELLING: "Nothing—nothing. I was knocking on the window-casing to make *you* hear, but you seemed preoccupied."

CAMPBELL: "Preoccupied! convulsed! cataclysmed! Look here: we're in a box,

Welling. And you've got us into it." He pulls WELLING's note out of his pocket, where he has been keeping his hand on it, and pokes it at him. "Is that yours?"

WELLING, examining it with bewilderment mounting into anger: "It's mine; yes. May I ask, Mr. Campbell, how you came to have this letter?"

CAMPBELL: "May I ask, Mr. Welling, how you came to write such a letter to my wife?"

WELLING: "To your wife? To Mrs. Campbell! I never wrote any such letter to her."

CAMPBELL: "Then you addressed it to her."

WELLING: "Impossible!"

CAMPBELL: "Impossible? I think I can convince you, much as I regret to do so." He makes search about MRS. CAMPBELL's letters on the table first, and then on the writing-desk. "We have the envelope. It came amongst a lot of letters, and there's no mistake about it." He continues to toss the letters about, and then desists. "But no matter, I can't find it; Amy's probably carried it off with her. There's no mistake about it. I was going to have some fun with you about it, but now you can have

some fun with me. Whom did you send Mrs. Campbell's letter to?"

WELLING: "Mrs. Campbell's letter!"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, pshaw! your acceptance or refusal, or whatever it was, of her garden fandango. You got an invitation?"

WELLING: "Of course."

CAMPBELL: "And you wrote to accept it or decline it at the same time that you wrote this letter here to some one else. And you addressed two envelopes before you put the notes in either. And then you put them into the wrong envelopes. And you sent this note to my wife and the other note to the other person—"

WELLING: "No, I didn't do anything of the kind!" He regards CAMPBELL with amazement, and some apparent doubt of his sanity.

CAMPBELL: "Well, then, Mr. Welling, will you allow me to ask what the deuce you did do?"

WELLING: "I never wrote to Mrs. Campbell at all. I thought I would just drop in and tell her why I couldn't come. It seemed so formal to write."

CAMPBELL: "Then will you be kind enough to tell me whom you *did* write to?"

WELLING: "No, Mr. Campbell, I can't do that."

CAMPBELL : " You write such a letter as that to my wife, and then won't tell me whom it's to ? "

WELLING : " No ! And you've no right to ask me. "

CAMPBELL : " I've no right to ask you ? "

WELLING : " No. When I tell you that the note wasn't meant for Mrs. Campbell, that's enough. "

CAMPBELL : " I'll be judge of that, Mr. Welling. You say that you were not writing two notes at the time, and that you didn't get the envelopes mixed. Then, if the note wasn't meant for my wife, why did you address it to her ? "

WELLING : " That's what I can't tell ; that's what I don't know. It's as great a mystery to me as it is to you. I can only conjecture that when I was writing that address I was thinking of coming to explain to Mrs. Campbell that I was going away to-day, and shouldn't be back till after her party. It was too complicated to put in a note without seeming to give my regrets too much importance. And I suppose that when I was addressing the note that I did write I put Mrs. Campbell's name on because I had her so much in mind. "

CAMPBELL, with irony : " Oh ! "

III

MRS. CAMPBELL ; MR. WELLING ;

MR. CAMPBELL.

MRS. CAMPBELL, appearing through the *portière* that separates the breakfast-room from the parlour beyond : “ Yes ! ” She goes up and gives her hand to MR. WELLING with friendly frankness. “ And it was very nice of you to think of me at such a time, when you ought to have been thinking of some one else.”

WELLING, with great relief and effusion : “ Oh, thank you, Mrs. Campbell ! I was sure you would understand. You couldn’t have imagined me capable of addressing such language to you ; of presuming—of—”

MRS. CAMPBELL : “ Of course not ! And Willis has quite lost his head. I saw in an instant just how it was. I ’m so sorry you can’t come to my party—”

CAMPBELL : “ Amy, have you been eavesdropping ? ”

MRS. CAMPBELL : “ There was no need of eavesdropping. I could have heard you out at Loon Rock Light, you yelled so. But as soon as I recognised Mr. Welling’s voice, I came to the top of the stairs and listened.

I was sure you would do something foolish. But now I think we had better make a clean breast of it, and tell Mr. Welling just what we've done. We knew, of course, the letter wasn't for me, and we thought we wouldn't vex you about it, but just send it to the one it *was* meant for. We've surprised your secret, Mr. Welling, though we didn't intend to ; but if you'll accept our congratulations—under the rose, of course—we won't let it go any further. It does seem so perfectly ideal, and I feel like saying, Bless you, my children ! You've been in and out so much this summer, and I feel just like an elder sister to Margaret."

WELLING : "Margaret?"

MRS. CAMPBELL : "Well, Miss Rice, then—"

WELLING : "Miss Rice?"

MRS. CAMPBELL, with dignity : "Oh, I'm sorry if we seem to presume upon our acquaintance with the matter. We couldn't very well help knowing it under the circumstances."

WELLING : "Certainly, certainly—of course: I don't mind that at all: I was going to tell you anyway: that was partly the reason why I came instead of writing—"

CAMPBELL, in an audible soliloquy: "I supposed he *had* written."

MRS. CAMPBELL, intensely: "Don't interrupt, Willis! Well?"

WELLING: "But I don't see what Miss Rice has to do with it."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "You don't see! Why, isn't Margaret Rice the one—"

WELLING: "What one?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "The one that you're engaged—the one that the note was really *for*?"

WELLING: "No! What an idea! Miss Rice? Not for an instant! It's—it's her friend—Miss Greenway—who's staying with her—"

MRS. CAMPBELL, in a very awful voice: "Willis! Get me some water—some wine! Help me! Ah! Don't touch me! It was you, *you* who did it all! Oh, *now* what shall I do?" She drops her head upon CAMPBELL's shoulder, while WELLING watches them in stupefaction.

CAMPBELL: "It's about a million times nicer than we could have expected. That's the way with a nice thing when you get it started. Well, young man, you're done for; and so are we, for that matter. We supposed that note which you addressed

to Mrs. Campbell was intended for Miss Rice—”

WELLING: “Ho, ho, ho! Ah, ha, ha! Miss Rice? Ha—”

CAMPBELL: “I’m glad you like it. You’ll enjoy the rest of it still better. We thought it was for Miss Rice, and my wife neatly imitated your hand on an envelope and sent it over to her just before you came in. Funny, isn’t it? Laugh on! Don’t mind us!”

WELLING, aghast: “Thought my note was for Miss Rice? Sent it to her? Gracious powers!” They all stand for a moment in silence, and then WELLING glances at the paper in his hand. “But there’s some mistake. You haven’t sent my note to Miss Rice: here it is now!”

CAMPBELL: “Oh, that’s the best of the joke. Mrs. Campbell took a copy”—MRS. CAMPBELL moans—“she meant to have some fun with you about it, and it’s ten times as much fun as *I* expected; and in her hurry she sent off her copy and kept the original. Perhaps that makes it better.”

MRS. CAMPBELL, detaching herself from him and confronting MR. WELLING: “No; worse! She’ll think we’ve been trying to hoax her, and she’ll be in a towering rage;

and she'll show the note to Miss Greenway, and you'll be ruined. Oh, poor Mr. Welling, Oh, what a fatal, fatal—mix!" She abandons herself in an attitude of extreme desperation upon a chair, while the men stare at her, till CAMPBELL breaks the spell by starting forward and ringing the bell on the table?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "What are you doing, Willis?"

CAMPBELL: "Ringing for Jane." As JANE appears: "Did you give Miss Rice the note?"

IV

JANE; MRS. CAMPBELL; WELLING;
CAMPBELL

JANE: "No, sir; I gave it to the man. He said he would give it to Miss Rice."

CAMPBELL: "Then it's all up. If by any chance she hadn't got it, Amy, you might have sent over for it, and said there was a mistake."

JANE: "He said Miss Rice was out driving with Miss Greenway in her phaeton, but they expected her back every minute."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Oh, my goodness!

And you didn't come to tell me? Oh, if we had only known! We've lost our only chance, Willis."

JANE: "I did come and knock on your door, ma'am, but I couldn't make you hear."

CAMPBELL: "There's still a chance. Perhaps she hasn't got back yet."

JANE: "I know she ain't, sir. I've been watching for her ever since. I can always see them come, from the pantry window."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Well, then, don't stand there talking, but run at once! O Willis! Never tell me again that there's no such thing as an overruling providence. Oh, what an interposition! Oh, I can never be grateful and humble enough— Goodness me, Jane! Why don't you go?"

JANE: "But where, ma'am? I don't know what you want me to do. I'm willing enough to do anything if I know what it is, but it's pretty hard to do things if you don't."

CAMPBELL: "You're perfectly right, Jane. Mrs. Campbell wants you to telegraph yourself over to Mrs. Rice's, and say to her that the letter you left for Miss Rice is not for her, but another lady, and Mrs. Campbell sent it by mistake. Get it and bring it back here, dead or alive, even if

Mrs. Rice has to pass over your mangled body in the attempt."

JANE, tasting the joke, while MRS. CAMPBELL gasps in ineffective efforts to reinforce her husband's instructions : "I will that, sir."

V

MRS. CAMPBELL ; WELLING ;
CAMPBELL

CAMPBELL : "And now, while we're waiting, let's all join hands and dance round the table. You're saved, Welling. So are you, Amy. And so am I, which is more to the point."

MRS. CAMPBELL, gaily : "Dansons !" She extends her hands to the gentlemen, and as they circle round the breakfast-table she sings—

*"Sur le pont d'Avignon,
Tout le monde y danse en rond."*

She frees her hands and courtesies to one gentleman and the other.

*"Les belles dames font comme ça ;
Les beaux messieurs font comme ça."*

Then she catches hands with them again,

and they circle round the table as before, singing—

*“Sur le pont d’Avignon,
Tout le monde y danse en rond.”*

“Oh dear! Stop! I’m dizzy—I shall fall.”
She spins into a chair, while the men continue solemnly circling by themselves.

CAMPBELL: “It is a sacred dance—

“Sur le pont d’Avignon—”

WELLING: “It’s an expiation—

“Tout le monde y danse en rond.”

MRS. CAMPBELL, springing from her chair, and running to the window: “Stop, you crazy things! Here comes Jane! Come right in here, Jane! Did you get it? Give it to me, Jane!”

WELLING: “I think it belongs to me, Mrs. Campbell.”

CAMPBELL: “Jane, I am master of the house—nominally. Give me the letter.”

VI

JANE; MRS. CAMPBELL; WELLING;
CAMPBELL

JANE, entering, blown and panting, through the open window: “Oh, how I did run—”

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Yes, yes! But the letter—"

WELLING: "Did you get it?"

CAMPBELL: "Where is it?"

JANE, fanning herself with her apron: "I can't hardly get my breath—"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Had she got back?"

JANE: "No, ma'am."

CAMPBELL: "Did Mrs. Rice object to giving it up?"

JANE: "No, sir."

WELLING: "Then it's all right?"

JANE: "No, sir. All wrong."

WELLING: "All wrong?"

CAMPBELL: "How all wrong?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "What's all wrong, Jane?"

JANE: "Please, ma'am, may I have a drink of water? I'm so dry I can't speak."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Yes, certainly."

CAMPBELL: "Of course."

WELLING: "Here." They all pour glasses of water and press them to her lips.

JANE, pushing the glasses away, and escaping from the room: "They thought Mrs. Campbell was in a great hurry for Miss Rice to have the letter, and they sent off the man with it to meet her."

VII

MRS. CAMPBELL ; WELLING ; CAMPBELL

MRS. CAMPBELL : "Oh, merciful goodness !"

WELLING : "Gracious powers !"

CAMPBELL : "Another overruling providence. Now you *are* in for it, my boy ! So is Amy. And so am I—which is still more to the point."

MRS. CAMPBELL : "Well, now, what shall we do ?"

CAMPBELL : "All that we can do now is to await developments : they'll come fast enough. Miss Rice will open her letter as soon as she gets it, and she won't understand it in the least ; how *could* she understand a letter in your handwriting, with Welling's name signed to it ? She'll show it to Miss Greenway—"

WELLING : "Oh, don't say that !"

CAMPBELL : "—Greenway ; and Miss Greenway won't know what to make of it either. But she's the kind of girl who'll form some lively conjectures when she reads that letter. In the first place, she'll wonder how Mr. Welling happens to be writing to Miss Rice in that affectionate strain—"

MRS. CAMPBELL, in an appealing shriek :
"Willis !"

CAMPBELL: "—and she naturally won't believe he's done it. But then, when Miss Rice tells her it's your handwriting, Amy, she'll think that you and Miss Rice have been having your jokes about Mr. Welling; and she'll wonder what kind of person you are, anyway, to make free with a young man's name that way."

WELLING: "Oh, I assure you that she admires Mrs. Campbell more than anybody."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Don't try to stop him; he's fiendish when he begins teasing."

CAMPBELL: "Oh, well! If she admires Mrs. Campbell and confides in you, then the whole affair is very simple. All you've got to do is to tell her that after you'd written her the original of that note, your mind was so full of Mrs. Campbell and her garden-party that you naturally addressed it to her. And then Mrs. Campbell can cut in and say that when she got the note she knew it wasn't for her, but she never dreamed of your caring for Miss Greenway, and was so sure it was for Miss Rice that she sent her a copy of it. That will make it all right and perfectly agreeable to every one concerned."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "And I can say that I sent it at your suggestion, and then, instead

of trying to help me out of the awful, awful—box, you took a cruel pleasure in teasing me about it! But I shall not say anything, for I shall not see them. I will leave you to receive them and make the best of it. Don't *try* to stop me, Willis." She threatens him with her fan as he steps forward to intercept her escape.

CAMPBELL: "No, no! Listen, Amy! You *must* stay and see those ladies. It's all well enough to leave it to me, but what about poor Welling? *He* hasn't done anything—except cause the whole trouble."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "I am very sorry, but I can't help it. I must go." CAMPBELL continues to prevent her flight, and she suddenly whirls about and makes a dash at the open window. "Oh, very well, then! I can get out this way." At the same moment MISS RICE and MISS GREENWAY appear before the window on the piazza. "Ugh! E—e—e! How you frightened me! But—but come in. So gl—glad to see you! And you—you too, Miss Greenway. Here's Mr. Welling. He's been desolating us with a story about having to be away over my party, and just getting back for Mrs. Curwen's. Isn't it too bad? Can't some of you young ladies—or all of you—

make him stay?" As MRS. CAMPBELL talks on, she readjusts her spirit more and more to the exigency, and subdues her agitation to a surface of the sweetest politeness.

VIII

MISS RICE, MISS GREENWAY, AND THE OTHERS

MISS RICE, entering with an unopened letter in her hand, which she extends to MRS. CAMPBELL: "What in the world does it all mean, Mrs. Campbell, your sending your letters flying after *me* at this rate?"

MRS. CAMPBELL, with a gasp: "My letters?" She mechanically receives the extended note, and glances at the superscription: "*Mrs. Willis Campbell.* Ah!" She hands it quickly to her husband, who reads the address with a similar cry.

CAMPBELL: "Well, well, Amy! This is a pretty good joke on you. You've sealed up one of your own notes, and sent it to Miss Rice. Capital! Ah, ha, ha!"

MRS. CAMPBELL, with hysterical rapture: "Oh, how delicious! What a ridiculous blunder! I don't wonder you were puzzled, Margaret."

WELLING: "What! Sent her your own letter, addressed to yourself?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Yes! Isn't it amusing?"

WELLING: "The best thing I ever heard of."

MISS RICE: "Yes. And if you only knew what agonies of curiosity Miss Greenway and I had suffered, wanting to open it and read it anyway, in spite of all the decencies, I think you ought to read it to us."

CAMPBELL: "Or at least give Miss Rice her own letter. What in the world did you do with that?"

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Put it in my desk, where I thought I put mine. But never mind it now. I can tell you what was in it just as well. Come in here a moment, Margaret." She leads the way to the parlour, whither MISS RICE follows.

MISS GREENWAY, poutingly: "Oh, mayn't I know too? I think that's hardly fair, Mrs. Campbell."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "No; or — Margaret may tell you afterwards; or Mr. Welling may, *now*!"

MISS GREENWAY: "How very formidable!"

MRS. CAMPBELL, over her shoulder, on

going out: "Willis, bring me the refusals and acceptances, won't you? They're upstairs."

CAMPBELL: "Delighted to be of any service." Behind MISS GREENWAY'S back he dramatises over her head to WELLING his sense of his own escape and his compassion for the fellow-man whom he leaves in the toils of fate.

IX

MISS GREENWAY; MR. WELLING

WELLING: "Nelly!" He approaches and timidly takes her hand.

MISS GREENWAY: "Arthur! That letter was addressed in your handwriting. Will you please explain?"

WELLING: "Why, it's very simple—that is, it's the most difficult thing in the world. Nelly, can you believe *anything* I say to you?"

MISS GREENWAY: "What nonsense! Of course I can—if you're not too long about it."

WELLING: "Well, then, the letter in that envelope was one I wrote to Mrs. Campbell—or the copy of one."

MISS GREENWAY: "The copy?"

WELLING: "But let me explain. You see, when I got your note asking me to be sure and come to Mrs. Curwen's—"

MISS GREENWAY: "Yes?"

WELLING: "I had just received an invitation from Mrs. Campbell for her garden-party, and I sat down and wrote to you, and concluded I'd step over and tell her why I couldn't come, and with that in my mind, I addressed your letter—the one I'd written you—to her."

MISS GREENWAY: "With my name inside?"

WELLING: "No; I merely called you 'darling'; and when Mrs. Campbell opened it she saw it couldn't be for her, and she took it into her head it must be for Miss Rice."

MISS GREENWAY: "For Margaret? What an idea! But why did she put your envelope on it?"

WELLING: "She made a copy, for the joke of it; and then, in her hurry, she enclosed that in my envelope, and kept the original and the envelope she'd addressed to Miss Rice, and—that's all."

MISS GREENWAY: "What a perfectly delightful muddle! And how shall we get out of it with Margaret?"

WELLING: "With Margaret? I don't care for her. It's you that I want to get out of it with. And you do believe me—you do forgive me, Nelly?"

MISS GREENWAY: "For what?"

WELLING: "For—for— 'I don't know what for. But I thought you'd be so vexed.'"

MISS GREENWAY: "I shouldn't have liked you to send a letter addressed darling to Mrs. Curwen; but Mrs. Campbell is different."

WELLING: "Oh, how archangelically sensible! How divine of you to take it in just the right way!"

MISS GREENWAY: "Why, of course! How stupid I should be to take such a thing in the wrong way!"

WELLING: "And I'm so glad now I didn't try to lie to you about it."

MISS GREENWAY: "It wouldn't have been of any use. You couldn't have carried off anything of that sort. The truth is bad enough for *you* to carry off. Promise me that you will always leave the other thing to *me*."

WELLING: "I will, darling; I will, indeed."

MISS GREENWAY: "And now we must tell Margaret, of course."

X

MISS RICE ; THEN MR. AND MRS. CAMPBELL,
AND THE OTHERS

MISS RICE, rushing in upon them, and clasping MISS GREENWAY in a fond embrace :
“ You needn’t. Mrs. Campbell has told me ; and O Nelly, I’m so happy for you ! And isn’t it all the greatest mix ? ”

CAMPBELL, rushing in, and wringing WELLING’S hand : “ You needn’t tell me, either ; I’ve been listening, and I’ve heard every word. I congratulate you, my dear boy ! I’d no idea she’d let you up so easily. You’ll allow yourself it isn’t a very likely story. ”

WELLING : “ I know it. But— ”

MISS RICE : “ That’s the very reason no one could have made it up. ”

MISS GREENWAY : “ *He* couldn’t have made up even a likely story. ”

CAMPBELL : “ Congratulate you again, Welling. Do you suppose she can keep so always ? ”

MRS. CAMPBELL, rushing in with extended hands : “ Don’t answer the wretch, Mr. Welling. Of course she can, with *you*. Dansons ! ” She gives a hand to Miss

Greenway and Welling each; the others join them, and as they circle round the table she sings—

*“Sur le pont d’Avignon,
Tout le monde y danse en rond.”*

THE ALBANY DEPÔT

(The action passes in Boston)

I

MR. AND MRS. EDWARD ROBERTS ; THE
CHARWOMAN

MRS. ROBERTS, with many proofs of an afternoon's shopping in her hands and arms, appears at the door of the ladies' room, opening from the public hall, and studies the interior with a searching gaze, which develops a few suburban shoppers scattered over the settees, with their bags and packages, and two or three old ladies in the rocking-chairs. THE CHARWOMAN is going about with a Saturday afternoon pail and mop, and profiting by the disoccupation of the place in the hour between the departures of two great expresses, to wipe up the floor. She passes near the door where MRS. ROBERTS is standing, and MRS. ROBERTS appeals to her in the anxiety which her failure to detect the

object of her search has awakened : " Oh, I was just looking for my husband. He was to meet me here at ten minutes past three ; but there don't seem to be any gentlemen."

THE CHARWOMAN : " Mem?"

MRS. ROBERTS : " I was just looking for my husband. He was to meet me here at ten minutes past three ; but there don't seem to be any gentlemen. You haven't happened to notice— "

THE CHARWOMAN : " There's a gentleman over there beyant, readin', that's just come in. He seemed to be lukun' for somebody." She applies the mop to the floor close to MRS. ROBERTS'S skirts.

MRS. ROBERTS, bending to the right and to the left, and then, by standing on tiptoe, catching sight of a hat round a pillar : " Then it's Mr. Roberts, of course. I'll just go right over to him. Thank you ever so much. Don't disturb yourself!" She picks her way round the area of damp left by the mop, and approaches the hat from behind. " It is you, Edward. What a horrid idea I had ! I was just going to touch your hat from behind, for fun ; but I kept myself from it in time."

ROBERTS, looking up with a dazed air

from the magazine in his hand: "Why, what would have happened?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh, you know it mightn't have been *you*."

ROBERTS: "But it *was* I."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Yes, I know; and I was perfectly sure of it; you're always so prompt, and I always wonder at it, such an absent-minded creature as you are. But you came near spoiling everything by getting here behind this pillar, and burying yourself in your book that way. If it hadn't been for my principle of always asking questions, I never should have found you in the world. But just as I was really beginning to despair, the Charwoman came by, and I asked her if she had seen any gentlemen here lately, and she said there was one now, over here, and I stretched up and saw you. I had such a fright for a moment, not seeing you; for I left my little plush bag with my purse in it at Stearns's, and I've got to hurry right back; though I'm afraid they'll be shut when I get there, Saturday afternoon, this way; but I'm going to rattle at the front door, and perhaps they'll come—they always stay, some of them, to put the goods away; and I can tell them I don't want to buy anything, but I left my bag with my

purse in it, and I guess they'll let me in. I want you to keep these things for me, Edward; and I'll leave my shopping-bag; I shan't want it any more. Don't lose any of them. Better keep them all in your lap here together, and then nobody will come and sit on them." She disburdens herself of her packages and parcels, and arranges them on her husband's knees, while she goes on talking. "I'm almost ready to drop, I'm so tired, and I do believe I should let you go up to Stearns's for me; but you couldn't describe the bag so they would recognise it, let alone what was in it, and they wouldn't give it to you, even if they would let you in to inquire: they're much more likely to let a lady in than a gentleman. But I shall take a coupé, and tell the driver simply to fly, though there's plenty of time to go to the ends of the earth and back before our train starts. Only I should like to be here to receive the Campbells, and keep Willis from buying tickets for Amy and himself, and us, too, for that matter; he has that vulgar passion—I don't know where he's picked it up—for wanting to pay everybody's way; and you'd never think of your Hundred-Trip ticket-book till it was too late. Do take your book out and

hold it in your hand, so you'll be sure to remember it as soon as you see Willis. You had better keep saying over to yourself, 'Willis—Hundred-Trip Tickets—Willis—Hundred-Trip Tickets'; that's the way I do. Where is the book? I have to remember everything! Do keep your ticket-book in your hand, Edward, till Willis comes."

ROBERTS: "But I want to read, Agnes, and I've got to hold my *Pop. Sci.* with one hand and keep your traps in my lap with the other. Did you find a cook?"

MRS. ROBERTS, with rapturous admiration of him: "Well, Edward you *have* got a brain! I declare, the cook had utterly gone out of my mind. Forgetting that plush bag makes me forget everything. I've got a splendid one—a perfect treasure. She won't do any of the wash, and we'll have to put that out; and she's been used to having a kitchen-maid; but she said we were such a small family that she could shell the peas herself. She's the most respectable-looking old thing you ever saw; and she's been having ten dollars a week from the last family she was in; but she'll come the summer with us for six. I was very fortunate to get her; all the good girls are snapped up for the

seaside in May, and they won't go into the country for love or money. It was the greatest chance ! She's such a neat, quiet, lady-like person, and all the better for being Irish and a Catholic : Catholics *do* give so much more of a flavour ; and I never could associate that Nova Scotia, sunken-cheeked leanness of Maria's with a cook. This one's name is—well, I forget what her name is ; Bridget, or Norah, or something like that—and she's a perfect little butter-ball. She's coming to go out on the same train with us ; and she'll get the dinner to-night ; and I shan't have the mortification of sitting down to a pick-up meal with Amy Campbell the first time she has visited us ; she's conceited enough about her housekeeping as it is, I'm sure, and I wouldn't have her patronising and pitying me for worlds. The cook will be here at half-past three precisely ; I had to pretend the train started a little earlier than it does so as to make her punctual ; they *are* such uncertain things ! and I don't suppose I shall be back by that time, quite, Edward, and so you must receive her. Let me see !” She glances up at the clock on the wall. “It's just quarter-past now, and our train goes at ten minutes to four—My goodness ! I'll have to hurry.”

THE COLOURED MAN, who cries the trains, walking halfway into the room and then out: "Cars ready for Cottage Farms, Longwood, Chestnut Hill, Brookline, Newton Centre, Newton Highlands, Waban, Riverside, and all stations between Riverside and Boston. Circuit Line train now ready on Track No. 3."

MRS. ROBERTS, in extreme agitation: "Good gracious, Edward, that's our train!"

ROBERTS, jumping to his feet and dropping all her packages: "No, no, it isn't, my dear! That's the Circuit Line train: didn't you hear? Ours doesn't go till ten to four, on the Main Line."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Oh yes, so it does. How ridiculous! But now I *must* run away and leave you, or I never shall get back in time. Be sure to speak to the cook as soon as she comes in, or she'll get discouraged and go away again; you can't depend on them for an instant; I told her *you* would be here to meet her, if I wasn't—I thought I might be late; and you mustn't let her slip. And if the Campbells happen to get here before I'm back, don't you give them the least inkling of our having just engaged a cook. I'm going to smuggle her into the house without Amy's knowing it; I

wouldn't have her know it for the world. She prides herself on keeping that impudent, spoiled thing of hers, with her two soups ; and she would simply never stop crowing if she knew I'd had to change cooks in the middle of the summer."

ROBERTS, picking up and dropping the multitudinous packages, and finally sitting down with them all in his lap, very red and heated : "I'll be careful, my dear."

MRS. ROBERTS : "How flushed you are, bending over ! You're so stout now, you ought to bend sidewise ; it's perfect folly, your trying to bend *straight* over : you'll get apoplexy. But now I *must* run, or I shall never be back in the world. Don't forget to look out for the cook !"

ROBERTS, at whom she glances with misgiving as she runs out, holding the parcels on his knees with both elbows and one hand, and contriving with the help of his chin to get his magazine open again : "No, no ; I won't, my dear." He loses himself in his reading, while people come and go restlessly. A gentleman finally drops into the seat beside him, and contemplates his absorption with friendly amusement.

II

ROBERTS AND WILLIS CAMPBELL

CAMPBELL: "Don't mind *me*, Roberts."

ROBERTS, looking up: "Heigh? What! Why, Willis! Glad to see you—"

CAMPBELL: "Now that you *do* see me, yes, I suppose you are. What have you got there that makes you cut all your friends?" He looks at Roberts's open page. "Oh! *Popular Science Monthly*. Isn't Agnes a little afraid of your turning out an Agnostic? By the way, where is Agnes?"

ROBERTS: "She left her purse at Stearns's, and she's gone back after it. Where's Amy?"

CAMPBELL: "Wherever she said she wouldn't be at the moment. I expected to find her here with you and Agnes. What time did you say your train started?"

ROBERTS: "At ten minutes to four. And, by the way—I'd almost forgotten it—I must keep an eye out for the cook Agnes has been engaging. She was to meet us here before half-past two, and I shall have to receive her. You mustn't tell Amy; Agnes doesn't want her to know

she's been changing cooks ; and I've got to be very vigilant not to let her give us the slip, or you won't have any dinner to-night."

CAMPBELL : "Is that so ? Well, that interests *me*. Were you expecting to find her in the *Pop. Sci.* ?"

ROBERTS : "Oh, I'd only been reading a minute when you came in."

CAMPBELL : "I don't believe you know how long you'd been reading. Very likely your cook's come and gone."

ROBERTS, with some alarm : "She couldn't. I'd only just opened the book."

CAMPBELL : "I dare say you *think* so. But you'd better cast your eagle eye over this assemblage now, and see if she isn't here ; though probably she's gone. What sort of looking woman is she ?"

ROBERTS, staring at him in consternation : "Bless my soul ! I don't know ! I never saw her !"

CAMPBELL : "Never saw her ?"

ROBERTS : "No ; Agnes engaged her at the Intelligence Office, and told her we should meet her here ; and she had to go back for her purse, and left me to explain."

CAMPBELL : "Ha, ha, ha ! Ha, ha, ha ! How did she expect you to recognise her ?"

ROBERTS: "I—I don't know, I'm sure. She—she was very anxious I shouldn't let her get away."

CAMPBELL, laughing: "You poor old fellow! What are you going to do?"

ROBERTS: "I'm sure I've no idea. Agnes—"

CAMPBELL: "Agnes ought to have a keeper. You know what I've always thought of *your* presence of mind, Roberts; but Agnes—I'm really surprised at Agnes. This is too good! I must tell Amy this. She'll never get over this. Ah, ha, ha, ha!"

ROBERTS: "No, no! You mustn't, Willis. Agnes would be very much provoked with me if you told Amy she had been engaging a cook. She expects to smuggle her into the house without Amy's knowing."

CAMPBELL: "And she left you to meet her here, and keep her—a cook you'd never set eyes on! Ha, ha, ha, ha! Ah, ha, ha, ha! What's her name?"

ROBERTS: "Agnes couldn't remember her last name—one never remembers a cook's last name. Her first name is Norah or Bridget."

CAMPBELL: "Maggie, perhaps; they all

sound alike. Ah, ha, ha ! Ha, ha ha ! This improves."

ROBERTS: "Don't, Willis ; you'll attract attention. What—what shall I do ? If Agnes comes back, and finds I've let the cook get away, she'll be terribly put out."

CAMPBELL: "Perfectly furious, you poor old fellow !—the rage of a disappointed pigeon ! I wouldn't be in your shoes for anything. Oh my ! I wish Amy was here. Did—did—Agnes"—(he struggles with his laughter, and explodes from time to time between syllables)—"did she tell you how the woman looked ?"

ROBERTS: "She said she was a very respectable-looking old thing—a perfect butter-ball. I suppose she was stout."

CAMPBELL: "That covers the ground of a great many cooks. They're apt to look respectable when they're off duty and they're not in liquor, and they're apt to be perfect butter-balls. Any other distinctive traits ?"

ROBERTS, ruefully: "I don't know. She's Irish, and a Catholic."

CAMPBELL: "They're apt to be Irish, and Catholics too. Well, Roberts, I don't see what you can ask better. All you've got to do is to pick out a respectable

butter-ball of that religion and nationality, and tell her you're Mrs. Roberts's husband, and you're to keep her from slipping away till Mrs. Roberts gets here."

ROBERTS: "Oh, pshaw, now, Willis! What would you do?"

CAMPBELL: "*There's* a respectable butter-ball over in the corner by the window there. You'd better go and speak to her. She's got a gingham bundle, like a cook's, in her lap, and she keeps looking about in a fidgety way, as if she expected somebody. I guess that's your woman, Roberts. Better not let her give you the slip. You'll never hear the last of it from Agnes if you do. And who'll get our dinner to-night?"

ROBERTS, looking over at the woman in the corner, with growing conviction: "She does answer to the description."

CAMPBELL: "Yes, and she looks tired of waiting. If I know anything of that woman's character, Roberts, she thinks she's been trifled with, and she's not going to stay to be made a fool of any longer."

ROBERTS, getting to his feet: "Do you think so? What makes you think so? Would you go and speak to her?"

CAMPBELL: "I don't know. She seems to be looking this way. Perhaps she thinks

she recognises *you*, as she never saw you before."

ROBERTS: "There can't be any harm in asking her? She does seem to be looking this way."

CAMPBELL: "Pretty blackly, too. I guess she's lost faith in you. It wouldn't be any use to speak to her now, Roberts."

ROBERTS: "I don't know. I'm afraid I'd better. I must. How would you introduce the matter, Willis?"

CAMPBELL: "Oh, I wouldn't undertake to say! I must leave that entirely to you."

ROBERTS: "Do you think I'd better go at it boldly, and ask her if she's the one; or—or—approach it more gradually?"

CAMPBELL: "With a few remarks about the weather, or the last novel, or a little society gossip? Oh, decidedly."

ROBERTS: "Oh, come now, Willis? What would you advise? You must see it's very embarrassing."

CAMPBELL: "Not the least embarrassing. Simplest thing in the world!"

THE COLOURED MAN, who calls the trains, coming and going as before: "Cars for Newton, Newtonville, West Newton, Auburndale, Riverside, Wellesley Hills, Wellesley, Natick, and South Framing-

ham. Express to Newton. Track No. 5."

CAMPBELL: "Ah, she's off! She's going to take the wrong train. She's gathering her traps together, Roberts!"

ROBERTS: "I'll go and speak to her." He makes a sudden dash for the woman in the corner. CAMPBELL takes up his magazine, and watches him over the top of it, as he stops before the woman, in a confidential attitude. In a moment she rises, and with a dumb show of offence gathers up her belongings and marches past ROBERTS to the door, with an angry glance backward at him over her shoulder. He returns crestfallen to CAMPBELL.

CAMPBELL, looking up from his magazine, in affected surprise: "Where's your cook? You don't mean to say she was the wrong woman?"

ROBERTS, gloomily: "She wasn't the right one."

CAMPBELL: "How do you know? What did you say to her?"

ROBERTS: "I asked her if she had an appointment to meet a gentleman here."

CAMPBELL: "You *did*? And what did she say?"

ROBERTS: "She said 'No!' very sharply.

She seemed to take it in dudgeon ; she fired up."

CAMPBELL : " I should think so. Sounded like an improper advertisement."

ROBERTS, in great distress : "*Don't*, Willis, for Heaven's sake !"

CAMPBELL : " Why, you must see it had a very clandestine look. How did you get out of it ?"

ROBERTS : " I didn't. I got into it further. I told her my wife had made an appointment for me to meet a cook here that she'd engaged—"

CAMPBELL : " You added insult to injury. Go on ?"

ROBERTS : " —and that she corresponded somewhat to the description ; and—and—"

CAMPBELL : " Well ?"

ROBERTS : " —and she told me she was no more a cook than my wife was ; and she said she'd teach me to be playing my jokes on ladies ; and she grabbed up her things and flew out of the room."

CAMPBELL : " Waddled, I should have said. But this is pretty serious, Roberts. She may be a relation of John L. Sullivan's. I guess we better get out of here ; or, no, we can't ! We've got to wait for Amy and Agnes."

ROBERTS: "What—what would you do?"

CAMPBELL: "I don't know. Look here, Roberts: would you mind sitting a little way off, so as to look as if I didn't belong with you? I don't want to be involved in this little row of yours unnecessarily."

ROBERTS: "Oh, come now, Willis! You don't think she'll make any trouble? I apologised. I said everything I could think of. She *must* think I was sincere."

CAMPBELL: "In taking her for a cook? I've no doubt she did. But I don't see how that would help matters. I don't suppose she's gone for an officer; but I suspect she's looking up the largest Irishman of her acquaintance, to come back and interview you. I should advise you to go out and get on some train; I'd willingly wait here for Amy and Agnes; but you see the real cook might come here, after you went, and I shouldn't know her from Adam—or Eve. See?"

ROBERTS, desperately: "I see— Good heavens! Here comes that woman back; and a man with her. Willis, you must help me out." ROBERTS gets falteringly to his feet, and stands in helpless apprehension, while MR. and MRS. MCILHENY bear down upon him from the door. MR. MCILHENY, a

small and wiry Irishman, is a little more vivid from the refreshment he has taken. He is in his best black suit, and the silk hat which he wears at a threatening slant gives dignified impressiveness to his figure and carriage. With some dumb-show of inquiry and assurance between himself and his wife, he plants himself in front of ROBERTS, in an attitude equally favourable for offence and defence.

III

THE MCILHENYS, ROBERTS, AND CAMPBELL

MCILHENY: "And are ye the mahn that's after takun' my wife for yer cuke?"

MRS. MCILHENY, indicating CAMPBELL, absorbed in his magazine: "And there's the other wan I saw jokun' wid um, and puttun' um up to it."

MCILHENY, after a swift glance at Campbell's proportions and self-possession: "That's what ye're after thinkun', Mary; but I haven't got annything to do with what ye're after thinkun'. All I wantt to know is what this mahn meant by preshumin' to speak to a lady he didn't know, and takun'

her for a cuke." To ROBERTS: "Will ye tell me that, ye—"

ROBERTS, in extreme embarrassment: "Yes, yes, certainly; I shall be very glad to explain, if you'll just step here to the corner. We're attracting attention where we are—"

McILHENY: "Attintion! Do ye suppose I care for attintion, when it's me wife that's been insulted?" He follows ROBERTS up, with MRS. McILHENY, as he retires to the corner where she had been sitting, out of the way of the people coming and going. CAMPBELL, after a moment, closes his magazine and joins them.

ROBERTS: "Insulted? By no manner of means? Nothing was further from my thoughts. I—I—can explain it all in a moment, my dear sir, if you will have patience; I can indeed. I have the highest respect for the lady, and I'm quite incapable of offering her an affront. The fact is—I hardly know how to begin—"

McILHENY: "Go ahn, sor; or I'll have to do the beginnun' meself, pretty soon." He shifts himself from one foot to another with a saltatory briskness.

ROBERTS: "The fact is, my wife had engaged a cook, up-town, and she had sent

her down here to meet me, and go out with me to our summer place at Weston."

MCILHENY: "An' fwhat has all that rigamarole to do wid your speakin' to a lady ye'd never been inthrojuiced to? Fwhat had yer wife's cook to do with Mrs. McIlheny?"

ROBERTS: "Why, I didn't know the cook by sight, you see. My wife had engaged her up-town, and appointed her to meet me here, without reflecting that I had never seen her, and wouldn't know who she was, when I *did* see her; she partly expected to be here herself, and so I didn't reflect either."

MCILHENY, with signs of an amicable interest: "An' she lift ye to mate a lady ye never had seen before, and expicted ye to know her by soight?"

ROBERTS: "Precisely."

MCILHENY, smiling: "Well, that's loike a wooman, Mary; ye can't say it ain't."

MRS. MCILHENY, grinning: "It's loike a mahn, too, Mike, by the same token."

MCILHENY; "Sure it's no bad joke on ye, sor."

CAMPBELL, interposing: "I was having my laugh at him when your good lady here noticed us. You see, I know his wife—

she's my sister—and I could understand just how she would do such a thing, and—ah, ha, ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha! I don't think I shall ever get over it."

McILHENY: "Sure it is good? Hu, hu, hu, hu! Mary, it's what ye'd call a bull, if it was Irish, I'm thinkun'; an' it's no bad bull as it is, my dear."

MRS. McILHENY, laughing: "Ye're right there, Mike. It's as fine a bull as ever there was."

CAMPBELL: "And my friend here insisted on going over and speaking to the lady, in hopes she could help him out of the difficulty. I suppose he bungled it; he only wanted to ask her if she'd seen a cook here, who had an appointment to go out of town with a gentleman. I'd been joking him about it, and he thought he must do something; and I fancy he made a mess of it. He was a good deal worked up. Ha, ha, ha! Ah, ha, ha, ha!" MR. and MRS. McILHENY join in his laugh, and finally ROBERTS himself.

THE COLOURED MAN, who calls the trains, coming and going: "Cars for Auburn-dale, Riverside, Pine Grove, and Newton Lower Falls. Express to Auburndale, Track No. 7."

MRS. MCILHENY : "There's our train, Mike ! Come !"

MCILHENY : "So 'tis, Mary ! Well, I'm hawpy to make yer acquaintance, gentlemen; and if ye're ever in the City Hahl when the Council is sittun', and ye'll send in your names to Mike McIlheny, I'll be pl'ased to show ye ahl the attintion in me power. Ye must excuse me now ; we're jist runnun' out to the Fahls to pass Sunday at a cousin's of Mrs. McIlheny's." He shakes hands with ROBERTS and CAMPBELL, and runs out, followed by his wife.

IV

ROBERTS AND CAMPBELL

CAMPBELL : "Distinguished public character. Well, we're out of that, Roberts. I had to crowd the truth a little for you, but I fetched the belligerent McIlheny. What are you going in for next ?"

ROBERTS : "I—upon my word, I haven't the least idea. I think I shall give up trying to identify the cook. Agnes must do it herself when she comes here."

CAMPBELL : "Oh no ! *That* won't do, old fellow. The cook may come here and give you the slip before Agnes gets back."

ROBERTS : "What would you do?"

CAMPBELL : "Well, I don't know ; I don't like to advise, exactly ; but it seems to me you've got to keep trying. You've got to keep your eye out for respectable butter-balls, and not let them slip through your fingers."

ROBERTS : "You mean, go up and speak to them ? I *couldn't* do that again."

CAMPBELL : "Well, of course you didn't make a howling success with Mrs. McIlheny ; but it wasn't a dead-failure either. But you must use a little more diplomacy—lead up to the subject gently. Don't go and ask a woman if she's a cook, or had an appointment to meet a gentleman here. *That* won't do. I'll tell you ! You might introduce the business by asking if she had happened to see a lady coming in or going out ; and then describe Agnes, and say you had expected to meet her here. And she'll say she hadn't seen her here, but such a lady had just engaged her as a cook. And then you'll say you're the lady's husband, and you're sure she'll be in in a moment. And there you are ! That's the way you ought to have worked it with Mrs. McIlheny. Then it would have come out all right."

ROBERTS, pessimistically: "I don't see how it would have made her the cook."

CAMPBELL: "It couldn't have done that, of course; but it would have done everything short of that. But we're well enough out of it, anyway. It was mighty lucky I came in with my little amendment just when I did. There's all the difference in the world between asking a lady whether she *is* a cook and whether she's *seen* a cook. That difference just saved the self-respect of the McIlhenys, and saved your life. It gave the truth a slight twist in the right direction. You can't be too careful about the truth, Roberts. You can't offer it to people in the crude state; it's got to be prepared. If you'd carried it through the way I wanted you to, the night you and old Bemis garotted each other, you'd have come out perfectly triumphant. What you want is not the *real* truth, but the *ideal* truth; not what you *did*, but what you *ought* to have done. Heigh? Now, you see, those McIlhenys have gone off with their susceptibilities in perfect repair, simply because I substituted a *for* for an *if*, and made you inquire *for* a cook instead of *if* she was a cook. Perhaps you did ask for instead of if?"

ROBERTS : "No, no. I asked her if she *was* a cook."

CAMPBELL : "Well, I'm glad the McIlhenys had too much sense to believe that. They're happy, anyway. They're enjoying the hobble that you and Agnes are in, with lofty compassion. They — hello ! here's that fellow coming back again !"

ROBERTS : "Who ? Which ? Where ?" He starts nervously about, and confronts MR. MCILHENY bearing down upon him with a countenance of provisional severity.

MCILHENY : "Just wan word more wid you, sor. Mrs. McIlheny has been thinkun' it oover, and she says you didn't ask her if she was after *seeun'* a cuke, but whether she was after *beun'* a cuke ? Now, sor, which wahs ut ? Out wid ut ! Don't be thinkun' ye can throw dust in our eyes because we're Irishmen !" A threatening tone prevails in MR. MCILHENY'S address at the mounting confusion and hesitation in ROBERTS. "Come ! are ye deaf, mahn ?"

ROBERTS, in spite of CAMPBELL'S dumb-show inciting him to fiction : "I—I—if you will kindly step apart here, I can explain. I was very confused when I spoke to Mrs. McIlheny."

MCILHENY, following him and WILLIS into

the corner : “ Fwhat made ye take my wife for a cuke ? Did she luke anny more like a cuke than yer own wife ? Her family is the best in County Mayo. Her father kept six cows, and she never put her hands in wather. And ye come up to her in a public place like this, where ye ’re afraid to spake aboove yer own breath, and ask her if she’s after beun the cuke yer wife’s engaged. Fwhat do ye mane by ut ? ”

ROBERTS : “ My dear sir, I know—I can understand how it seems offensive ; but I can assure you that I had no intention—no—no—” he falters, with an imploring glance at CAMPBELL, who takes the word.

CAMPBELL : “ Look here, Mr. McIlheny, you can appreciate the feelings of a gentleman situated as my friend was here. He had to meet a lady whom he had never seen before, and didn’t know her by sight ; and we decided—Mrs. McIlheny was so pleasant and kindly-looking—that he should go and ask her if she had seen a lady of the description he was looking for, and—”

MCILHENY : “ Yessor ! I can appreciate ahl *that*. But fwhy did he ask her if *she* was the lady ? Fwhy did he ask her if she was a cuke ? That’s what I wantt to know ! ”

CAMPBELL : " Well, now, I'm sure you can understand that. He was naturally a good deal embarrassed at having to address a strange lady ; his mind was full of his wife's cook, and instead of asking her if she'd *seen* a cook, he bungled and he blundered, and asked her—I suppose—if she *was* a cook. Can't you see that? how it would happen? "

McILHENY, with conviction : " Yessor, I can. And I'll feel it an hannor if you gintlemen will join me in a glass of wine on the carner, across the way—"

CAMPBELL : " But your train? "

McILHENY : " Oh, down the thrain ! But I'll just stip aboard and tell Mrs. McIlheny I've met a frind, an' I'll be out by the next thrain, an' I'll be back wid you in a jiffy." He runs out, and CAMPBELL turns to ROBERTS.

ROBERTS : " Good heavens, Willis ! what are we going to do? Surely, we can't go out and drink with this man? "

CAMPBELL : " I'm afraid we shan't have the pleasure. I'm afraid Mrs. McIlheny is of a suspicious nature ; and when Mr. Mac comes back, it'll be to offer renewed hostility instead of renewed hospitality. I don't see anything for us but flight, Roberts. Or,

you can't fly, you poor old fellow ! You've got to stay and look out for that cook. I'd be glad to stay for you, but, you see, I should not know her."

ROBERTS : "I don't know her either, Willis. I was just thinking whether you couldn't manage this wretched man rather better alone, I—I'm afraid I confuse you ; and he gets things out of me—admissions, you know—"

CAMPBELL : "No, no ! Your moral support is everything. That lie of mine is getting whittled away to nothing ; we shall soon be down to the bare truth. If it hadn't been for these last admissions of yours, I don't know what I should have done. They were a perfect inspiration. I'll tell you what, Roberts ! I believe you can manage this business twice as well without me. But you must keep your eye out for the cook ! You mustn't let any respectable butter-ball leave the room without asking her if she's the one. You'll know how to put it more delicately now. And I won't complicate you with McIlheny any more. I'll just step out here—"

ROBERTS : "No, no, no ! You mustn't go, Willis. You mustn't indeed. I shouldn't know what to do with that

tipsy nuisance. Ah, here he comes again !”

CAMPBELL, cheerily, to the approaching McILHENY : “ I hope you didn’t lose your train, Mr. McIlheny !”

McILHENY, darkly : “ Never moind my thrain, sor ! My wife says it was a put-up jahb between ye. She says ye were afther laughun’, and lukun’, and winkun’ at her before this mahn stipped up to spake to her. Now what do ye make of that ?”

CAMPBELL : “ We were laughing, of course. I had been laughing at my friend’s predicament, in being left to meet a lady he’d never seen before. You laughed at it yourself.”

McILHENY : “ I did, sor.”

ROBERTS, basely truckling to him : “ It was certainly a ludicrous position.”

CAMPBELL : “ And when we explained it, it amused your good lady too. She laughed as much as yourself—”

McILHENY : “ She did, sor. Ye’re right. Sure it would make a cow laugh. Well, gentlemen, ye must excuse me. Mrs. McIlheny says I mustn’t stop for the next thrain, and I’ll have to ask you to join me in that glass of wine some other toime.”

CAMPBELL : “ Oh, it’s all right, Mr.

McIlheny. You've only got about half a minute." He glances at the clock, and McIlheny runs out, profusely waving his hand in adieu.

ROBERTS, taking out his handkerchief and wiping his forehead: "Well, thank Heaven! we're rid of him at last."

CAMPBELL: "I'm not so sure of that. He'll probably miss the train. You may be sure Mrs. McIlheny is waiting for him outside of it, and then we shall have them both on our hands indefinitely. We shall have to explain and explain. Fiction has entirely failed us, and I feel that the truth is giving way under our feet. I'll tell you what, Roberts!"

ROBERTS, in despair: "What?"

CAMPBELL: "Why, if McIlheny should happen to come back alone, we mustn't wait for him to renew his invitation to drink; we must take him out ourselves, and get him drunk; so drunk he can't remember anything; stone drunk; dead drunk. Or, that is, *you* must. I haven't got anything to do with him. I wash my hands of the whole affair."

ROBERTS: "You mustn't, Willis! You know I can't manage without you. And you know I can't take the man out and get

him drunk. I couldn't. I shouldn't feel that it was right."

CAMPBELL: "Yes, I know. You'd have to drink with him; and you've got no head at all. You'd probably get drunk first, and I don't know what I should say to Agnes."

ROBERTS: "That isn't the point, Willis. I couldn't ask the man to drink; I should consider it immoral. Besides, what should you do if the cook came while I was away? You wouldn't know her."

CAMPBELL: "Well, neither would you, if you stayed."

ROBERTS: "That's true. There doesn't seem to be an end of it, or any way out of it. I must just stay and bear it."

CAMPBELL: "Of *course* you must stay. And when McIlheny comes back, you'd better ask him to look upon the wine when it is red."

ROBERTS: "No; that's impossible, quite. I shouldn't mind the association—though it isn't very pleasant; but to offer drink to a man already—Do you suppose it would do to ask him out for a glass of soda? Plain soda would be good for him. Or I could order claret in it, if the worst came to the worst."

CAMPBELL : " Claret ! What Mr. McIlheny requires is forty-rod whisky in a solution of sulphuric acid. You must take that, or fourth-proof brandy straight, with him."

ROBERTS, miserably : " I couldn't ; you know I couldn't."

CAMPBELL : " What are you going to do, then ?"

ROBERTS : " I don't know ; I don't know. I—I'll give him in charge to a policeman."

CAMPBELL : " And make a scandal here ?"

ROBERTS : " Of course it can't be done !"

CAMPBELL : " Of *course* it can't. Give a councilman in charge ? The policeman will be Irish too, and then what'll you do ? You're more likely to be carried off yourself, when the facts are explained. They'll have an ugly look in the police report."

ROBERTS : " Oh, it can't be done ! Nothing can be done ! I wish Agnes would come !"

THE COLOURED MAN, who calls the trains :
" Cars ready for South Framingham, Whitneys, East Holliston, Holliston, Metcalf's, Braggville, and Milford. Express to Framingham. Milford Branch. Track No. 3."

V

MRS. ROBERTS, MRS. CAMPBELL, ROBERTS,
AND CAMPBELL ; THEN THE COOK
AND MCILHENY

MRS. ROBERTS, rushing in and looking about in a flutter, till she discovers her husband: "Good gracious, Edward! Is that our train? I ran all the way from the station door as fast as I could run, and I'm perfectly out of breath. Did you ever hear of anything like my meeting Amy on the very instant? She was getting out of her coupé just as I was getting out of mine, and I saw her the first thing as soon as I looked up. It was the most wonderful chance. And the moment we pushed our way through the door and got inside the outer hall, I heard the man calling the train—he calls so distinctly—and I told her I was sure it was our train; and then we just simply flew, both of us. I had the greatest time getting my plush bag. They were all locked up at Stearns's as tight as a drum, but I saw somebody inside, moving about, and I rattled the door, and made signs till he came; and then I said I had left my plush bag; and he said it was against the rules, and I'd have to come Monday; and

I told him I knew it was, and I didn't expect him to transgress the rules, but I wished very much to have my plush bag, because there were some things in it that I wished to have, as well as my purse; for I'd brought away my keys in it; and I knew Willis—how d'ye do, Willis?—would want wine with his dinner, and you'd have to break the closet open if I didn't get the key; and so he said he would see if the person who kept the picked-up things was there yet; and it turned out he was, and he asked me for a description of the bag and its contents; and I described them all, down to the very last thing; and he said I had the greatest memory he ever saw. And now I think everything is going off perfectly, and I shall be able to show Amy that there's something inland as well as at the seaside. Why don't you speak to her, Edward? What is the matter? What are you looking at?" She detects him in the act of craning his neck to this side and that, and peering over people's heads and shoulders in the direction of the door. "Hasn't Norah—Bridget, I mean—come yet?" She frowns significantly, and cautions him concerning MRS. CAMPBELL by pressing her finger to her lip.

ROBERTS: "Yes—yes, she's here; I suppose she's—she's here. How do you do, Amy? So glad—" He continues his furtive inspection of the doorway, and WILLIS turns away with a snicker.

MRS. CAMPBELL: "Willis, what are you laughing at? Is there anything wrong with my bonnet? Agnes, *is* there? He would let me go about looking like a perfect auk. Did I bang it getting out of the coupé. Do tell me, Willis!"

MRS. ROBERTS, to her husband: "You don't mean to say you haven't *seen* her yet?"

ROBERTS, desperately: "Seen her? How should I know whether I've seen her? I never saw her in my life."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Then what are you looking for, in that way?"

ROBERTS: "I—I'm looking for her husband."

MRS. ROBERTS: "Her husband?"

ROBERTS: "Yes. He keeps coming back." CAMPBELL bursts into a wild shriek of laughter.

MRS. ROBERTS, imploringly: "Willis, what *does* it mean?"

MRS. CAMPBELL, threateningly: "Willis, if you don't behave yourself—"

MRS. ROBERTS, with the calm of despair :
“ Well, then, she isn’t coming ! She’s given us the slip ! I might have known it ! Well, the cat might as well come out of the bag first as last, Amy, though I was trying to keep it in, to spare your feelings ; I knew you’d be so full of sympathy.” Suddenly to her husband : “ But if you saw her husband— Did he say she sent him ? I didn’t dream of her being married. How do you know it’s her husband ? ”

ROBERTS : “ Because—because she went out and got him ! Don’t I tell you ? ”

MRS. ROBERTS : “ Went out and got him ? ”

ROBERTS : “ When I spoke to her.”

MRS. ROBERTS : “ When you spoke to her ? But you said you didn’t see her ! ”

ROBERTS : “ Of *course* I didn’t see her. How should I see her, when I never saw her before ? I went up and spoke to her, and she said she wasn’t the one. She was very angry, and she went out and got her husband. He was tipsy, and he’s been coming back ever since. I don’t know what to do about the wretched creature. He says I’ve insulted his abominable wife ! ”

CAMPBELL, laughing : “ O Lord ! Lord ! This will be the death of me ! ”

MRS. CAMPBELL : "This is one of your tricks, Willis ; one of your vile practical jokes."

CAMPBELL : "No, no, my dear ! I couldn't invent anything equal to *this*. Oh my ! oh my !"

MRS. CAMPBELL, seizing him by the arm : "Well, if you don't tell instantly, what it is—"

CAMPBELL : "But I *can't* tell. I promised Roberts I wouldn't."

ROBERTS, wildly : "Oh, tell, tell !"

CAMPBELL : "About the cook, too, Agnes ?"

MRS. ROBERTS : "Yes, yes ; everything ! Only tell !"

CAMPBELL, struggling to recover himself : "Why, you see, Agnes engaged a cook, up-town—"

MRS. ROBERTS : "I didn't want you to know it, Amy. I thought you would be troubled if you knew you were coming to visit me just when I was trying to break in a new cook, and so I told Edward not to let Willis know. Go on, Willis."

MRS. CAMPBELL : "And I understand just how you felt about it, Agnes ; you knew he'd laugh. Go on, Willis."

CAMPBELL : "—and she sent her down

here, and told Roberts to keep her till she came herself."

BOTH LADIES: "Well?"

CAMPBELL: "And I found poor old Roberts here, looking out for a cook that he'd never seen before, and expecting to recognise a woman that he'd never met in his life." He explodes in another fit of laughter. The ladies stare at him in mystification.

MRS. ROBERTS: "I would have stayed myself to meet her, but I'd left my plush bag with my purse in it at Stearns's, and I had to go back after it."

MRS. CAMPBELL: "She *had* to leave him. What is there to laugh at?"

MRS. ROBERTS: "I see nothing to laugh at, Willis."

CAMPBELL, sobered: "You *don't*?"

BOTH LADIES: "No."

CAMPBELL: "Well, by Jove! Then perhaps you don't see anything to laugh at in Roberts's having to guess who the cook was; and going up to the wrong woman, and her getting mad, and going out and bringing back her little fiery-red tipsy Irishman of a husband, that wanted to fight Roberts; and my having to lie out of it for him; and their going off again, and the husband coming back four or five times

between drinks, and having to be smoothed up each time—”

BOTH LADIES : “ No ! ”

MRS. ROBERTS : “ It was simply horrid. ”

MRS. CAMPBELL : “ It wasn’t funny at all ; it was simply disgusting. Poor Mr. Roberts ! ”

CAMPBELL : “ Well, by the holy poker ! This knocks me out ! The next time I’ll marry a man, and have somebody around that can appreciate a joke. The Irishman said himself it would make a cow laugh. ”

MRS. CAMPBELL : “ I congratulate you on being of the same taste, Willis. And I daresay you tried to heighten the absurdity, and add to Mr. Roberts’s perplexity. ”

ROBERTS : “ No, no ! I assure you, Amy, if it hadn’t been for Willis, I shouldn’t have known how to manage. I was quite at my wits’ end. ”

MRS. CAMPBELL : “ You are very generous, I’m sure, Mr. Roberts ; and I suppose I shall have to believe *you*. ”

ROBERTS : “ But I couldn’t act upon the suggestion to take the man out and treat him ; Willis was convinced himself, I think, that that wouldn’t do. But I confess I was tempted. ”

MRS. ROBERTS : “ Treat him ? ”

ROBERTS : " Yes. He was rather tipsy already ; and Willis thought he would be more peaceable perhaps if we could get him quite drunk ; but I really couldn't bring my mind to it, though I was so distracted that I was on the point of yielding."

BOTH LADIES : " Willis !"

MRS. ROBERTS : " You wanted poor Edward to go out and drink with that wretched being, so as to get him into a still worse state ?"

MRS. CAMPBELL : " You suggested that poor Mr. Roberts should do such a thing as that ? Well, Willis !"

MRS. ROBERTS : " Well, Willis !" She turns from him more in sorrow than in anger, and confronts a cooklike person of comfortable bulk, with a bundle in her hand, and every mark of hurry and exhaustion in her countenance. " Why, here's Bridget now !"

THE COOK : " Maggie, mem ! I was afraid I was after missun' you, after all. I couldn't see the gentleman anywhere, and I've been runnun' up and down the depôt askun' fur um ; and at last, thinks I, I'll try the ladies' room ; and sure enough here ye was yourself. It was lucky I thought of it."

MRS. ROBERTS : " Oh ! I forgot to tell

you he'd be in the ladies' room. But it's all right now, Maggie; and we've just got time to catch our train."

CAMPBELL, bitterly: "Well, Agnes, for a woman that's set so many people by the ears, you let yourself up pretty easily. By Jove! here comes that fellow back again!" They all mechanically shrink aside, and leave ROBERTS exposed to the approach of McILHENY.

McILHENY: "Now, sor, me thrain's gahn, and we can talk this little matter oover at our aise. What did ye mane, sor, by comin' up to the Hannorable Mrs. Michael McIlheny and askun' her if she was a cuke? Did she luke like a person that'd demane herself to a manial position like that? Her that never put her hands in wather, and had hilpers to milk her father's cows? What did ye mane, sor? Did she luke like a lady, or did she luke like a cuke? Tell me that!"

THE COOK, bursting upon him from behind ROBERTS, who eagerly gives place to her: "*I'll* tell ye that meself, ye impidint felly! What's to kape a cuke from lukun' like a lady, or a lady from lukun' like a cuke? Ah, Mike McIlheny, ye drunken blaggurd, is it *me* ye're tellin' that Mary Molloy never put her hands in wather, and kept

hilpers to milk her father's cows ! Cows indade ! It was wan pig under the bed ; and more shame to them that's ashamed to call it a pig, if ye *are* my cousin ! I'm the lady the gentleman was lukun' for, and if ye think I'm not as good as Mary Molloy the best day she ever stipped, I'll thank ye to tell me who is. Be off wid ye, or I'll say something ye'll not like to hear !”

McILHENY : “ Sure I was jokin', Maggie ! I was goun' to tell the gintleman that if he was lukun' for a cuke, I'd a cousin out of place that was the best professed cuke in Bahston. And I'm glad he's got ye : and he's a gintleman every inch, and so's his lady, I dar' say, though I haven't the pleasure of her acquaintance—”

THE COLOURED MAN, who calls the trains : “ Cars ready for West Newton, Auburndale, Riverside, Wellesley, Natick, and South Framingham. Train for South Framingham. Express to West Newton. Track No. 5.”

MRS. ROBERTS : “ That's our train, Amy ! We get off at Auburndale. Willis, Edward, Maggie—come !” They all rush out, leaving McILHENY alone.

McILHENY, looking thoughtfully after them : “ Sure, I wonder what Mary'll be wantun' me to ask um next !”

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